University of Alberta

The Space of the Body in the "Anti-World": A Study of Kurahashi Yumiko's Early Writing

by

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Abstract

Beginning with a look at the feminist practices behind the canonization of Japanese women's literature, this thesis re-examines the early theory and fiction of Kurahashi Yumiko. Although Kurahashi's work can be considered to be fiercely political, it is also distinctly metaphysical. I argue that because of the influence of feminist practices both on the way in which we think about women's literature and on the way in which we conceptualize the space of the body, an in-depth look at the space of the body in Kurahashi's literature of the "anti-world" has been critically underdeveloped. Through textual analysis, I demonstrate how Kurahashi's textual bodies may be read in terms of the way they afford the negativity of the "anti-world" presence. Giving primacy to this negativity through the physical presence of concepts such as nothingness and emptiness in the space of the body, the substance of Kurahashi's metaphysics come to light.

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Introduction

In her article "Re/reading 'Modern Japanese Literature'" Reiko Abe Auestad conceptualizes her approach to Japanese literature through what she considers to be the dominant discursive turn of the 20th century. She critically posits her approach to Japanese literature through a specific understanding of the primacy of politics in representation. Borrowing on Stuart Hall and Edward Said's perspectives, she asserts that:

> The discursive turn of more recent years… is concerned not just with the 'detail of how "language" works, but with the broader role of discourse in culture'; it is concerned with the 'effects and consequences of representation— its "politics."' The emphasis is placed on how the 'knowledge which a particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are [and should be] represented, thought about, and practiced and studied'… Knowledge is thus thought of as being inextricably enmeshed in relations of power because it regulates social conduct by dictating what is acceptable. Any thought on representation must therefore consider its historical, practical and 'worldly' context of operation in such a way as to illuminate its discursive effect on the *outside world*.[1]

This discursive turn has been taken up, realized, and popularized by various proponents of Western criticism. An inquiry into the relationship between representation and the "outside world" has constituted a large part of literary debates in the West (most obviously through Marxist and Feminist critiques, and most recently in Cultural studies), and also, though in a different spirit, in Japan through 20th century debates over *junbungaku* (純文学, pure literature) and the primacy of the *shi-shōsetsu* (私小説, I-novel). Although this dialogue is proliferate in criticism, it tends to subordinate or subsume the question of how literature functions to the now more dominant question of

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[1] Reiko Abe Auestad "Re/Reading 'Modern Japanese Literature'," in Reading East Asian Writing, eds. Michel Hockx and Ivo Smits (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 256. My emphasis.

how literature functions in society and relates to reality. Although the primacy given to the question of politics in representation (and more specifically for my purposes in literature) now informs the direction of criticism in any field of inquiry in the humanities, I chose to orient my project by focusing on what may be over looked or silenced through this very primacy.

When approaching a writer such as Kurahashi Yumiko, 倉橋由美子 (1935-2005) through the critical paradigm left in the wake of this 'discursive turn,' a number of different associations spring to mind. Perhaps the first and most obvious way in which we conceptualize Kurahashi is through her sex; being a female writer, her texts belong to the now safely though not unproblematically canonized category of women's writing. Indeed, her early writing systematically engages some of the most important issues of feminism such as the space of the woman in society and the construction of sex and gender. The other prominent feature that we may keep in mind in light of this discursive turn is that most of her early writing is largely experimental; we come to demarcate these texts by virtue of their polemical otherness. These two general associations constitute (and conversely are constituted by) the directions that critical inquiry has taken. We can, broadly speaking, interpret her texts through either a feminist agenda promoted by the paradigm of woman's literature, or through the conceptualization of her texts as an experimental polemic against realist approaches to literature and unquestioned reality. Although it is tempting, and as previous critical work has shown us also very productive to enter into an analysis of Kurahashi's texts by way of either of these two critical paths, I enter my project with a healthy skepticism of each. My purpose for this is twofold; first, I wish to show the limitations of both of these conceptualizations and the theoretical and

practical implications that underlie the critical approaches they promote. Secondly, I want to suggest that if we can somehow get beyond these critical paradigms we can arrive at an alternative, and as of yet, little explored perspective on the original texts in question.

By distancing my position from critical practices which serve to illuminate the politics of representation, I am by no means suggesting that we should divorce Kurahashi's work from its context; in fact, Kurahashi's texts function in large part precisely through their immediate engagement with the literary dialogues and fictional texts of her time. Her early works clearly manifest the influences of such anti-realist writers such as Kafka and Camus, and her later ones, generally speaking, function largely through their intertextual references to both Western and Japanese myths. On the whole, Kurahashi's literary career has been shaped by the likes of, for example, critics Hirano Ken 平野謙 (1907-1978) and Etō Jun 江藤淳(1933-1999) who have engaged her polemic against realism and influenced the reception of her early work.[2] To some extent, biographical information also sheds some light on to her writing. Born in Kōchi in 1935 to a father who was a dentist, she left for Kyoto in 1953 to study Japanese literature for a year. She subsequently moved to Tokyo where, following somewhat in her father's footsteps, she was to become a dental hygienist. Pursuing her own inclinations, however, she enrolled in the French department at Meiji University, graduating in 1960 with a B.A thesis on Sartre. She married in 1964, and studied creative writing for a year (1966-1967) in the United States under a Fulbright scholarship. This kind of information may help us better contextualize references to, for example, Sartre or even to dentist-father figures which reoccur throughout her texts but it perhaps fails to illuminate the more abstract and

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[2] See Atsuko Sakaki's "Kurahashi Yumiko's Negotiations with the Fathers."

nuanced aspects of Kurahashi's texts.

By looking at the early period of Kurahashi Yumiko's fiction writing (1959-1969)[3] I wish open a space of discourse that can critically address some of the theoretical preoccupations developed by Kurahashi herself and by some of the critics that came after her. Beginning with a general introduction and interrogation of the paradigm of "women's literature" I call for a reappraisal of the position that criticism has afforded Kurahashi's texts inside of this canon. In the following section the limits of this paradigm are made clear by looking at the way that Kurahashi's concept of *han-sekai* (反世界, anti-world) is appropriated by critical discourse. The relevance of the pivotal concept of *han-sekai* is also explored insofar as it serves as a kind of map by which to navigate most of Kurahashi's work. I argue that the space of the body in Kurahashi's texts is the central structural component that upholds the space of the anti-world.[4] By redefining the way the body is critically conceptualized, I can finally come to look at some of the textual bodies of Kurahashi's own making. Following this trajectory I hope to etch out an understanding

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[3] I will be focusing mainly on the first 5 years or so of Kurahashi's work; these are the works in which she most obviously sets forth the construction of the anti-world. I will also be using the work *Sumiyakisuto Q no bōken* which, while it was published in 1969, fits in conceptually more with her early work than with her later work of that decade. In fact, according to Kumiko Nakanishi *Sumiyakisuto Q no bōken* was "presumably finished [...] or nearly finished [by 1965]" although it was not published until some years later. Kumiko Nakanishi, "The Life and Works of Yumiko Kurahashi" (MA Thesis, San Diego State University, 1987), 24.

[4] Atsuko Sakaki has pointed out herself that "the human body serves as a metaphor of the world of negativity, 'the anti-world'." Atsuko Sakaki "Kurahashi Yumiko"*Modern Japanese Writers* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2001), 187. I would like to take this further saying that the body is not just a metaphor for the world of negativity, but that it is an actual presence of the anti-world. Furthermore, I like to think of the body as a specific component of the anti-world. The body would be the part that provided for an other world inside of that anti-world.

of the way in which Kurahashi's work develops a kind of metaphysics[5] that systematically affords emptiness and negativity a presence through the space of the body.

[5] I choose this word to gesture towards the systematic principles that underpin a specific textual ontology. Although there is a danger in borrowing Western philosophical terminology to talk about not just Japanese culture but also literature more generally, I am using these terms selectively to sustain a systematic reading of Kurahashi's texts.

Chapter 1: Problems with Canonizing "Japanese Women's Literature" in the West

These days when we speak of modern Japanese women's literature in the West[6] a fairly clear picture comes to mind. Since the 1980s this area of study has steadily gained ground as it has defined its canon and its critical approach in the face of preceding decades of silence or, at best, random cultural footnotes devoted to truly seminal female writers.[7] This trend in Japanese studies has mirrored a similar process of recuperation of various women's writing from other literatures as well. As feminist practices[8] have become more commonplace throughout the literary academy it has become quite politically incorrect if not outright unacceptable to disregard women's writing when looking at a nation's literature. But what are the political implications of conceptualizing a text as "women's writing"? What are the constraints imposed on a text through the very process of critically defining it through a specific vocabulary? In the case of Japanese women's literature it is undeniable that the thrust of literary criticism has been necessary for developing this heretofore absent space of forum for these women's texts. However, because this process was necessarily a political one in that it had to react against patriarchal trends in literary criticism, it has been largely informed by a pervasively

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[6] In using this term I am necessarily implicated in the harmful and totalizing gesture of reinscribing the artificial though discursively powerful dichotomy of East and West. However, I wish to amend my use of the term with a clarification. For my purposes here, "the West" signifies mainly the academic discourses coming out of North American and, to a lesser extent, European universities.

[7] Take for example the seminal text of Donald Keene's 1984 volume, *Dawn to the West*, which reserves only one short chapter ("The Revival of Writing by Women") for a discussion of women's literature. Unfortunately this trend continues in some publications. A recent volume entitled *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Japanese Literature Volume 1: From Restoration to Occupation, 1968-1945*, provides only three brief mentions of women writers in an over 800 page "comprehensive" overview of literature from that period.

[8] By this term I wish to signify the broad and diverse arena of practices that are all linked by the pervasive agenda of recuperating, and giving voice to women and women's texts.

political bent. This direction of criticism which is most broadly based on interpretations that show women's texts and subtexts as resisting dominant patriarchal discourses also indirectly marginalizes the texts themselves. To go beyond this necessary but ultimately limiting category of discourse I think that it is critical that we open up the way we read and discuss Japanese women's literature.

The necessity for establishing and promoting a woman's literary canon in any tradition is now addressed by a well entrenched systematic practice. In fact, the ideological motivations behind this work of canon formation have been explicit and openly celebrated. The formation of these canons has largely been driven by a desire to unearth texts that could define a specifically female voice. An exemplary perspective is found in the preface to the *Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* which runs something like a statement of purpose:

> We [the editors] have tried to fashion a book that will define the ways in which the female imagination has struggled to articulate visions and revisions of a literature energized by female consciousness, impelled by female creativity, and empowered by female community.[9]

This appeal to a "female consciousness" constitutes the defining principle of the canon and subsequent criticism. The main problem with all such totalizing efforts is of course that texts are necessarily misappropriated or misrepresented at times.[10] Although this Norton anthology is by now a little dated (1985) and is specifically geared toward literature in the English tradition, the ideological underpinnings present in this statement

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[9] Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, eds., *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Tradition in English* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1985), xxxii.

[10] Of course feminists themselves are criticized for and criticize themselves for these totalizing practices. The very premise of an essentially "female consciousness" is itself contended; for a concise discussion of the debates inside of feminism present around the time that this Norton Anthology was published see, for example, Elaine Showalter's "Feminist criticism in the wilderness."

have inevitably defined the trajectory of canon formation of women's literature as it is being studied in contemporary times.

The proponents of the Japanese women's canon of literature and criticism have followed suit, strategically and openly aligning themselves with Anglo-American projects such as the *Norton Anthology of Literature by Women*.[11] The Japanese women's literary canon as it is conceptualized by the West is defined perhaps most successfully to date by the 1996 volume *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing* which situates itself inside of a specifically feminist discourse about text and criticism. Textually speaking, "the volume as a whole represents the kind of effort undertaken by feminist scholars in the Anglo-American tradition during the early stages of feminist criticism: to recover a feminine tradition."[12] As for the theoretical paradigms out of which this canon is formed, the preface to the collection declares that "the essays in the volume represent the first fruits of a newly emerging movement within Japanese literary studies to apply feminist and gender criticism to Japanese texts in theoretical ways."[13] Taken together, these statements which organize and define both the fictional texts and the criticism of these texts can be seen as the basic paradigm through which the canon is formed.

Some of the problems of this project of canon formation do not elude the proponents of the project themselves. The main problem which is perceived in pursuing gender-based readings of texts is that such readings are to some

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[11] See "Preface" of Paul Gordon Schalow and Janet Walker, eds., *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing* (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996), xiii.

[12] Schalow and Walker, xv.

[13] Schalow and Walker, xiv.

> extent inevitably implicated in a limited (and limiting) binary model of maleness and femaleness and that the very concern with gender may inadvertently be a critical playing out of aspects of the sex/gender system that support male domination.[14]

That is, by speaking of gender, especially in a differential fashion, the critic may inevitably reinscribe the problems and prejudices that they are looking to undermine. Being aware of this problem, critics who work through this paradigm of "women's literature" are careful not to essentialize and generalize. In fact they remain all the more vigilant about issues of difference. In the same volume Chieko Ariga, for example, uses Luce Irigaray's concept of "the logic of the same" to criticize practices which position "the feminine as other only in relation to masculine sameness and not as a different mode of signification."[15] This concept acknowledges the necessity to mark 'the feminine' through difference, but admits that when read through the paradigm of patriarchy, difference is seen only as lack. This problematic construction of otherness is not just true of the otherness of woman, but also the otherness of Japan, and more broadly "the East" as it is defined by the West. Although I am focusing here mainly on the implications of defining a canon through the boundaries and connotations of "woman," I wish to pause for a moment on the equally problematic practice of defining a canon through notions of "Japan" or even "Asia" in a Western context. Haun Saussy speaks to this point well, saying that the main

> source of error in studies of 'the East' [is] the antithetical nomenclature that frames 'the other' as 'our other', the very thing that 'we' are not. When done straightforwardly and presented as the results of knowledge,

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[14] Schalow and Walker, 2.

[15] Chieko Ariga "Text Versus Commentary: Struggles over the Cultural Meanings of 'Woman'," in *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing* (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 372.

> such writing produces inverted tautologies… negative portraits of what we think of ourselves.[16]

The otherness of the East is relevant only insofar as it comes to delineate the West through its negativity. The primacy of the dominant space of the West then, is maintained in this understanding of otherness. Similarly, this mode of thinking may lead to woman being only understood as what man is not. This becomes a possible pitfall when attempting to form a canon around the idea of the otherness of women's literature.

Conceding to and working through some of the problems of canon formation, exponents of "women's literature" have managed to keep the paradigm fairly self-reflexive so as to account for many different texts and incorporate many criticisms. Although this self-reflexive criticism does bring awareness and sensitivity to the problems inherent in the discourses that the paradigm promotes, the discourses do not yet acknowledge the problems inherent in the very vocabulary of their approach. As I have shown, the paradigm of "women's literature" is motivated by an explicit politically charged agenda. Because women's texts were relegated to silence[17] in a patriarchal system, the desire to reconstitute a visible and legitimate tradition of women's literature implicitly had to be voiced as a polemic against patriarchy simply in order to be heard. Hence the necessary emphasis on feminist and gender criticism in the very definition of

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[16] Haun Saussy. "Là, Tout N'est Qu'ordre et Beauté." in *Reading East Asian Writing The Limits of Literary Theory*, eds. Michel Hockx and Ivo Smits (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 54.

[17] This silence is due to either the process of canonization, which largely excluded women, or due to the fact that women were generally not encouraged to write. Although it is true that in Japan's case, historically women's writing (*kana*) was valued by men, this did not directly translate into a fair canonization of women's texts. For example *kana* was especially valued by men insofar as it is shown to have been also appropriated by them (i.e. *Tosa Nikki*, *Tosa Diary*, 935). women were relegated to *kana* writing, and the *kana* writing that was canonized was not necessarily the texts by women, but rather the texts that were written by men. (*Inventing the Classics*, 9-11). Indeed a straightforward conceptualization of the space of women's texts is problematized by the many complexities presented by Japan's literary and social history.

women's literature. However, this paradigm which establishes and validates the project of "recovering" a women's literature situates all further discussion of Japanese women's texts inside of a vocabulary that inherently values and promotes assertions of the 'feminine' as a literary tradition. Furthermore, texts are rendered significant by this discourse only insofar as they can be seen to participate in what Sharalyn Orbaugh calls the "economies of power." Granted it is acknowledged that:

> even those women who claim to accept their roles in the economy of power would be implicitly challenging it by the very act of writing… to write *against a background of* patriarchal control, even if one is not writing 'contra,' is still an act of 'writing against.'[18]

This perspective affords an all-inclusive critical position that incorporates any text by a woman into the practices of the canon of women's literature. Indeed, part of the success of feminist and gender criticism is that any text by a woman or by a man for that matter could be analyzed, and could be shown to manifest something poignant about the gender-based "economies of power." However, when starting with any explicit agenda, the critic necessarily glosses over or misrepresents parts of a text that are left unarticulated by the chosen critical approach. When giving primacy to one critical narrative in a text, the others must necessarily fall by the wayside. Although the vocabulary of the paradigm of "women's literature" was explicitly formed to combat the dominant discourse of patriarchy, it has in a sense come to constitute a dominant discourse of its own, relegating some readings of texts into relative silence.

A further problem of reading a text through a specific paradigm is not only that certain readings are silenced, but that the readings that are afforded a text also inevitably

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[18] Sharalyn Orbaugh "The Body in Contemporary Japanese Women's Fiction," in *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing* (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 123.

marginalize it by codifying it. Although this is true generally of any literature attempting to define its own parameters, the case of women's writing in Japan as it has been codified through the problematic signifier of *joryū bungaku* (女流文学, women's school literature) shows specific evidence of this unfortunate marginalization. By relegating modern Japanese women writers to a canon of their own which the dominant literary establishment systematically devalues, the writer's works themselves are refused access to the arena of serious literature.[19] The project of recuperating women's literature is a double edged sword; although codifying a text through the paradigm of "women's literature" ensures its survival through a now legitimated and sustainable canon, it also relegates the text to the boundaries of that canon. Women's texts will now be taught and read in universities, but they will be taught more often than not under the auspices of a women's literature class, a women's studies seminar, or a feminist theory class, etc. Is it possible that a text may move from the categorization of "women's literature" to "world literature," for example? While some optimistically view the build-up of new canons "as a means of strengthening [the] ethnic, national, or gender identities [of marginalized groups] amidst a larger Eurocentric, androcentric discourse,"[20] the problem of being excluded from the dominant discourse still remains. Indeed, although "women's literature" may form a canon of its own, it is arguably still largely and perhaps necessarily an absent space in the arena of world literature.

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[19] For a discussion on canon formation of *joryū bungaku* in Japan see Joan E. Ericson's "The Origin of the Concept of 'Women's Literature'" in *The Woman's Hand*. For a broader discussion of canon formation in Japan see *Inventing the Classics: Modernity, National Identity, and Japanese Literature* ed. By Haruo Shirane and Tomi Suzuki and also Haruo Shirane's "Canon Formation in Japan: Genre, Gender, Popular Culture, and Nationalism" in *Reading East Asian Writing: the limits of literary theory*.

[20] Haruo Shirane, "Canon Formation in Japan: Genre, Gender, Popular Culture, and Nationalism," in *Reading East Asian Writing the limits of literary theory*, eds. Michel Hocks and Ivo Smits (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 31.

I am not, however, advocating that we discontinue the practice of the recuperation of women or any other "minority" literature, nor am I suggesting that the practice of feminist or gender criticism is obsolete— far from it. I agree wholeheartedly with the statement that: "until the texts that we study are produced, published, distributed, evaluated, critiqued and consumed in a gender-blind context [...] *we* cannot responsibly ignore gender in our on-going engagement with them."[21] Through my approach, however, I am suggesting that simply a feminist or gender reading of a text will not suffice. And in fact, such a one-sided reading will do an injustice to the text it is attempting to 'recuperate' or validate by confining it to the parameters of that canon.

In the case of Kurahashi Yumiko, her texts have been given exactly this kind of treatment in the West. Most often appropriated for the purpose of illustrating the constructedness of gender or the problems of patriarchal society, Kurahashi's work has been valued mainly because of its political insights. And indeed, there is much evidence to substantiate this direction of criticism. Although Kurahashi's work does remain fiercely political, not just in terms of gender criticism, but also insofar as its offers a systemic criticism of the dominant discourses of her time, it is also rigorously metaphysical. However, this aspect of her texts has been largely co-opted by one-sided readings developed by persistently political agendas. My project will be to explore the way in which Kurahashi's textual metaphysics has been appropriated by the proponents of "women's literature" and further to explore the way in which meaning could also proliferate outside of this critical approach. In this way I wish to acknowledge both the

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[21] Sharalyn Orbaugh, "The Construction of Gendered Discourse in the Modern Study of Japanese Literature," *Across Time and Genre: Reading and Writing Women's Texts* Conference Proceedings, eds. Janice Brown and Sonja Arntzen. (University of Alberta, 2002), 8.

possibilities and limitations of gender criticism while gesturing to the possibilities beyond it. Reading beyond the boundaries of feminist and gender criticism not only opens up the way we conceptualize Kurahashi's work, but also the way in which we may generally think about writing by women.

Chapter 2: Exploring the Anti-World in Theory

To begin to understand the general textual metaphysics through which Kurahashi purportedly constructs her texts we must look at her construction of the concept of *hansekai* (反世界, anti-world). This concept and its political underpinnings are developed most explicitly in Kurahashi's seminal 1966 essay "Shōsetsu no meiro to hiteisei"[22] [The Maze of the Novel and Negativity] which I will be analyzing in this chapter. The anti-world is so pivotal an idea precisely because it both marks Kurahashi's polemical argument against traditional conceptions of literature, and it serves as the space out of which she subsequently develops her own agenda for writing. Furthermore, the anti-world is put forth as an alternative paradigm not only through which to write but also through which one can understand literature.

Kurahashi's polemic is against any literature which caries the aim of "report[ing] <<reality>>."[23] This idea of "*jijitsu*" (事実, reality) is problematized for Kurahashi, because although she highlights its constructed nature (and through this maneuver attempts to undermine its claims to "truth,") she also recognizes that it is still a powerful and functional element both in the construction of fiction on the part of the writer as well as in the expectations which inform the reception of literature by readers and critics. Throughout her essay Kurahashi systematically attempts to undermine all such basic concepts that structure our idea of reality; words such as *seikatsu* (生活, life), *taiken* (体

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[22] All quotes are taken from "Shōsetsu no meiro to hiteisei" in *watashi no naka no kare e*. (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1970). The original for the translations can be found in the appendix . All translations will be mine unless otherwise specified.

[23] See appendix.

験, experience), *shinjitsu* (真実, fact/ truth), *kotoba* (ことば, words/language)[24] etc., are all lifted out of their context, and as a result out of their original and unquestioned ability to signify meaning by their enclosure in two dart structures. Demarcated both visually and conceptually, these concept words become empty signifiers. By systematically re-signifying these paradigmatic words as constructs,[25] Kurahashi attempts to free the space of literature from the confines of typical presumptions about the relationship between literature and reality, and by extension about the substance of reality.

Kurahashi finds manifestations of this desire to report "reality" in many different kinds of novels.[26] "Orthodox novels," "classical novels," "actual novels," "propaganda novels," "I-novels," and "popular fiction" all come in their turn to be criticized as a form of "reportage."[27] Although Kurahashi does historically locate the object of her attack specifically in the realist fiction of the late 19th century[28] and in the dominant 20th century literary form in Japan of the *shi-shōsetsu*,[29] her attack is systemic. She attacks not just the writer of this kind of fiction as a "slave, a biased-like intellectual who simply comments

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[24] These words and others are used (and demarcated) systematically throughout the essay. These for example are all taken from page 286.

[25] These concept words that are taken to signify reality in their everyday currency are emptied of meaning and authority. By lifting these words out of their original meanings Kurahashi also allows for them to exist as pure signifiers. In fact all her literature attempts to celebrate signifiers as being an arbitrary and autonomous site of meaning; as the characters of her fiction are relegated to the space of the signifier (their names predominantly being letters from the alphabet as opposed to proper names), so, too is her own ideal of literature.

[26] *Shōsetsu* being translated here as "novels," or sometimes more loosely as "fiction."

[27] See appendix.

[28] Kurahashi, "Shōsetsu no meiro," 290.

[29] Kurahashi, "Shōsetsu no meiro," 287.

on <<reality>>"[30] but also the reader who consumes fiction only insofar as it "is a product which gives [the reader] a report of <<reality>> or a <<moral lesson>> or <<entertainment>>."[31] Critics who can only analyze fiction in terms of how the writing they look at may refer to something in reality are also taken to task[32] along with the whole literary establishment (*bundan* 文壇) of Japan with its jargon[33] and its various publications.[34] It is only after she systematically undermines the entire literary and (by extension) cognitive system that she posits her alternative conception of literature: the anti-world.

Although the anti-world is constructed in opposition to the tenets of literature which defers to reality it is not necessarily defined simply through this opposition. There is an important distinction to be made here insofar as the anti-world could be seen to function only as a polemic against the dominant discourse of Kurahashi's time. In fact, conceptually speaking, the anti-world is built up as an autonomous space of inquiry, only after the systematic misconceptions of realism are cleared away. Kurahashi's anti-world is defined as being "a world which is not a world… others may call this <<god>> or <<existence>> or <<nothingness>>."[35] The "anti" of anti-world should be taken not to signify a negative relation to a "world" through opposition, but rather should be thought

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[30] See appendix.

[31] See appendix.

[32] Kurahashi, "Shōsetsu no meiro," 295.

[33] Kurahashi, "Shōsetsu no meiro," 287.

[34] Kurahashi, "Shōsetsu no meiro," 295.

[35] See appendix.

of as a recognition of a negation.[36] The negativity of the anti-world is precisely that which constitutes its presence, rather than as one might mistakenly argue, the negativity afforded by a positive presence of a real or otherwise world. That is, I argue that Kurahashi is making negativity a presence in-and-of-itself.

Unfortunately most criticism of Kurahashi's work has afforded her writing relevance only insofar as it is seen as a negative screen through which to view, comment on and reinterpret the positive space of the real world. Yet, Kurahashi's anti-world begs not just for a shift in writing but also a shift in criticism and reading. Just as her criticism of traditional writing was systemic (attacking not just the writers but also the entire set of presumptions that we may bring to literature) so too is her vision of the anti-world. In this way, Kurahashi is not just attempting to define the parameters of her own literature, but is also attempting to make space for a different paradigm through which to conceptualize literature. Unfortunately, while her fiction has radically displayed this shift, criticism seems to have lagged behind. Although Kurahashi criticized critics who evaluated writers through such statements as "such and such a problem is wonderfully depicted"[37] for constituting a system wherein only fiction that comes to bear on reality was valued, critics of Kurahashi's work have followed in a similar vein. The anti-world is relegated to

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[36] Although "han" literally means "anti-thesis" or "opposite," through an explication of the definition given to the "anti-world" by Kurahashi, I think we can arrive at a broader understanding of the significance of this "han." That is, once again, the "han" would not simply signify the opposite of world (indeed if we quite simply look at an example of an antiworld of one of her texts things are not simply reversed) but rather would signify a presence of a world defined by its negativity.

[37] See appendix.

being read negatively; it is relevant only as a kind of mirror to our own world.[38] By defining her fictional spaces negatively, that is, by marking the real world positively, critics find Kurahashi's texts relevant only insofar as they signify the borders (come to define the parameters) of the world. Examples of this approach are numerous among her critics. They fall aptly into the critical practices of the 'discursive turn' which I opened this paper with. I will not dwell on this 'negative' approach here but simply give a couple of brief examples to illustrate my point more clearly. In one of her essays, for example, Atsuko Sakaki delineates Kurahashi's vision of an anti-world for the purposes of gesturing towards how "Kurahashi's anti-world is… analogous to the female position in a patriarchal society."[39] Susan Napier echoes this approach in her analysis of Kurahashi's writing as "message fiction."[40] Napier reads Kurahashi's "logic of inversion [as a way to] … consciously confront the disappointing consensus reality of twentieth-century Japan."[41] Both these examples illustrate how critics read Kurahashi's anti-world in terms of how it reflects on society. The question I pose, and that Kurahashi's texts beg, is not 'what does the anti-world mean (for us, for the world, for reality)?' but rather 'what does it mean to give an anti-world presence?'

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[38] I outline the reasons for this trend in the first chapter of this thesis. Because the project of defining a canon of women's literature has been informed by a specific critical approach, Kurahashi has been read in a large part by virtue of the way her texts can be seen to comment upon and criticize real world issues such as, most commonly, patriarchy and sex and gender assumptions. Cultural studies has also motivated critics to focus on interpreting literature through its relation to reality.

[39] Sakaki, "(Re)canonizing Kurahashi Yumiko: Toward Alternative Perspectives for 'Modern' 'Japanese' 'Literature'" *Öe and Beyond: Fiction in Contemporary Japan*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 159.

[40] Napier, Susan, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature the Subversion of Modernity*. (London, New York: Routhledge, 1996), 142.

[41] Napier, 142.

Although these standard approaches are certainly insightful especially insofar as they illuminate something about the "outside world," they limit us to looking at Kurahashi's texts only through the way in which they perform negatively, that is through the way in which they reflect on society, which would be the positive, relevant space. I think certain problems arise with these kinds of readings because on one level, Kurahashi's texts implicitly reject the possibility for any kind of commentary on society and reality. So, for example, Kurahashi tells us: "my novels are like an onion with one layer of pastiche after another. If you peel them infinitely, you will find nothing inside them."[42] If these texts are recognizably about nothing, then I think what is important to look at is perhaps not necessarily the way in which they could possibly relate to or speak of our world, but rather, the way in which these texts function to give nothingness, negativity or the anti-world an actual presence. What becomes relevant than is how the space of negativity itself is articulated and made present rather then how the space of negativity articulates the space of our world. Orbaugh seems to gesture to this possibility by speaking of the anti-world as a kind of "fertile emptiness."[43] That is, presumably, emptiness may be conceptualized through its agency as a possible space of creation.

Read positively, Kurahashi's anti-world can be explored as a self-constituting metaphysical system. As I previously implied, this approach affords negativity an actual presence. The strong emphasis Kurahashi puts on negativity initially comes to light

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[42] qtd. in Atsuko Sakaki's "(Re)canonizing Kurahashi Yumiko," 161.

[43] Sharalyn Orbaugh, "The Body in Contemporary Japanese Fiction," in *The Woman's Hand: Gender and theory in Japanese Women's Writing*, eds. Paul Gordon Schalow and Janet A. Walker (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 125. Although the terminology that Orbaugh uses here does leave room for the perspective I am exploring here, her main line of inquiry in this essay revolves specifically around a political reading of women's texts.

through the very method that she undertakes in writing this essay. In order to talk about the fiction that Kurahashi wants to write, she begins by delineating the kind of fiction that she does not want to write. Furthermore, although she systematically passes through a string of examples of these fictions which she "does not want to write" they are never actual examples, but rather, conceptual models that she wishes to avoid. Writing for her is not grounded in the specific, but in the conceptual realm. The signifier for this 'fiction that she does not want to write' becomes the sentence which surfaces several times in the essay: "The marchioness went out at five."[44] Indeed, she rejects this sentence precisely because of its own specificity and attention to detail. By defining her own fiction by the negative space left over after defining the fiction that she abhors, and furthermore by obscuring those very spaces that she does define by denying them specificity, the idea of her own fiction comes across, from the very beginning through a kind of paradigmatic negativity.

In all her subsequent delineations of the anti-world the negative aspect of any binary is always rewritten as a not-negative. It is not simply that Kurahashi reverses the binary, for example, privileging evil over good, but that she conflates the two terms and reconceptualizes the negative aspect of the binary as a space full of presence; that is, evil consumes the space of good. The presence of this negativity is symbolized best through her recurrent use of the image of *gan* (癌, cancer). Precisely because the connotations carried with the image of cancer are so negative and destructive, she celebrates the image of her own writing as a cancer. Once again, the negative and the grotesque are for Kurahashi a desirable thing that constitutes her textual metaphysics. She states: "my

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[44] See appendix.

novels, in opposition to the novels of the orthodox old kind of novels, are a parasite. They feed on weakness and become like a destructive <<cancer>>."[45] The parasitic aspect of her writing is celebrated by privileging "montage" writing and "forgery."[46] Kurahashi recognizes that her celebration of negativity, when read through the paradigm of binary oppositions, could be seen as simply a kind of inversion of the binary— yet she works to collapse the very structure that understands the world and fiction only through opposition:

> In opposition to our daily world, things that have a <<form>> have the characteristics of <<forgery>>, therefore being branded with the stigma of <<evil>> is frequently unavoidable. However, at least some strong novels are the materialization of an excessive <<freedom>> that goes against the idea of being <<evil>>. By appropriating time in the imaginary world in opposition to the time of everyday life, strong novels become their own reality stealing the crown of <<existence>> away from the real world. More over, at times <<goodness>> (the principle of <<continuity>> that controls the real world) is overwhelmed by the fire of <<evil>> (the principle of <<death>>) and the world goes to ruin...[47]

By privileging the space of "evil" or "death" or "cancer" or "nothingness" her metaphysics allows for a structure whereby negativity is afforded a presence. Although the "world" of hierarchal boundaries goes to ruin (the world that privileges "reality" at the expense of the "imaginary world") there is a definite "nothingness" (in this case, the "principle of <<death>>") left in its wake. This "nothingness" is the very essence of the anti-world. The anti-world is a manifestation of a textual metaphysics that celebrates negativity as a positive space. Kurahashi's metaphysics marks a paradigm shift away from a binary understanding of the world where concepts such as "reality" come to define the parameters of fiction, into an understanding of a world which can have a presence

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[45] See appendix.

[46] See appendix.

[47] See appendix.

(i.e., be positively constructed) through the space of negativity.

Having looked at the general metaphysics that constitutes the anti-world, we can look more closely at the actual way in which the anti-world is constructed. The ideal of the anti-world is delineated by the following quote:

> The ironclad rule of reporting <<reality>> or <<events>> is always to make clear the <<five W's>>; that is, <<When, Where, Who, What, Why>>. Instead, my fiction rejects these restrictions and makes multi-storied buildings in the air. At an unknown time, in a place that is nowhere, someone who is no one for no reason wants to do something but in the end does nothing. That is my ideal of a novel.[48]

Being acutely aware of the discourse into which and through which she is speaking, Kurahashi necessarily begins with a refutation of the assumptions of fiction as previously stated. Although the premise of the anti-world is once again shown to be inherently polemical, the essay also proceeds to delineate the space of nothingness that constitutes the anti-world. As the categories that normally constitute our understanding of a piece of fiction, or "reality" dissolve, the celebration of ambiguity that is the anti-world takes precedence.

Despite its seeming ambiguity, the anti-world is structured by some specific rules that constitute its shape. The following quote functions to illustrate the organizing principles of the anti-world:

> I, as the author, do not manipulate the characters as would <<God>>. Rather, I assign a primary <<hypothesis>>, throw the characters into the labyrinth of <<imaginary space>>, and let them walk about in the labyrinth and strike the walls with their heads… The <<hypothesis>> is comparable to an axiom in mathematics, which remains unaccountable as the novel closes. The <<plausibility>> of such a world has to be supported

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[48] See appendix.

by the minute construction of details that appears to make sense.[49]

Insofar as there is a 'hypothesis', an original premise of a fictional space and subsequent 'details' that emerge in accordance with that hypothesis, Kurahashi's fiction would seem to be perfectly logical. That there is a knowable 'hypothesis' that shows expected results indicates an acknowledged transparency to her work. However odd or '*anti*-world' (*ir*rational, *un*natural, *un*expected) her 'hypothesis' may be, neither the characters in the text nor the readers of the text are particularly disturbed by the fact that strange things happen. Strange things happen, yes, but because they happen due to a knowable (though perhaps not immediately understandable) reason (the hypothesis) we are reassured that the text follows an understandable logic. Problems occur for a smooth reading of the text, however, when there are gaps or leaps in the logic. Although Kurahashi puts forth a seemingly cohesive logic in a text that follows a certain premise, this logic is not strictly governed by rational modes of thinking. This becomes clear in a continuation of the passage from the essay mentioned above:

> As mathematics as a system is constructed by formal logic, the world of my fiction is governed by the logic of <<dreams>>. Leaps and twists inherent to dreams transform this world into a grotesque <<form>>. As the <<deformation>> reaches an apogee, I disappear suddenly, leaving behind a novel that resembles a mysterious castle, or a grotesque snake.[50]

It is precisely these 'leaps and twists' that by betraying our understanding of the logic of the text, surprise us and seduce us. And like any good seduction, the object of our desire remains illusive; the meaning of the 'grotesque form' cannot be explained but by the

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[49] 292 in the original. Translation taken from Atsuko Sakaki "Kurahashi Yumiko's Negotiations," 297-298. For the sake of cohesion I have restored Kurahashi's use of the << symbols. In Sakaki's translation some of these signs are recorded as quotation marks while others are omitted.

[50] 292 in the original. The translation is a continuation from Sakaki. "Kurahashi Yumiko's Negotiations," 298.

'logic of dreams'; the articulation of that other space in the text that exists outside of the 'hypothesis' and 'minute details' that accord with it, remains poignantly silent. These 'leaps and twists', however, are recorded, if not by their actual articulation, recorded, in a sense, by their motion; the text contains traces of their passing. In their motion they resemble chaos. Being unmapped by the textual world of Kurahashi's making (cosmos), these leaps and twists take on proliferating signification of their own (chaos). I have used several words now to approximate the presence in Kurahashi's texts of that other space that cannot be touched by textual rules that 'appear to make sense': 'silence' indicates the unarticulated nature of this space, 'chaos' indicates the motion of it as it is made present in the text. Passing through Kurahashi's texts, we encounter some other conceptions of this space through their repetitions: darkness, emptiness, and nothingness all record the traces of that silent motion of the 'logic of dreams.'

At the risk of attempting to articulate the unarticulatable or represent the unrepresentable, I wish to emphasize the primacy of these silent and empty 'leaps and twists' through Barthes' notion of gaps. Although Kurahashi does privilege these spaces with agency (they leave signs of their passing when they reap havoc with her textual worlds rendering the perfect textual logic afforded by the 'hypothesis' inconsistent) she goes no further. And indeed perhaps she cannot, insofar as the unrepresentable cannot be textually articulated except by being gestured toward by way of the gap, that is by way of the empty signifiers she herself privileges (emptiness, nothingness, etc). I would like to go so far as to suggest that these gaps are the site of significance in Kurahashi's texts in that they are the spaces out of which meaning is created (here I am thinking back to the idea of the 'fertility' of emptiness). We can look to Barthes' ideas to lend precisely this

significance to Kurahashi's 'leaps and twists'. Although he does not codify his ideas specifically through notions of significance and meaning, favoring instead the ambiguous code of *jouissance,* his understanding does allow us to give primacy to the space I am trying to approximate, that is, the space beyond representation.[51] In Barthes' textual politics, things are meaningful insofar as they afford the experience of pleasure. Barthes states: "Is not the most erotic portion of a body *where the garment gapes*?... it is intermittence... which is erotic... it is this flash itself which seduces, or rather: the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance."[52] This gap becomes the space through which a text may indeed be meaningful. Alice Jardine reflects that "it is through the gaps in the knowable world-text that meaning is shown to be simultaneously present and absent (if only in the flash of a *coup de des*); where it is shown to escape the control of the Aufhebung[53] through a process beyond representation."[54] In this notion of the gap, then, we find the dichotomy of presence and absence undermined by the inscription of the two elements in the same space. Similarly, Kurahashi's 'leaps and twists', which I read as textual (erotic) gaps, come to define her anti-world through a kind of presence of absence. This process, this 'staging of absence' is yet another way in which Kurahashi celebrates negativity. While the presence of negativity is that which constitutes the anti-world, the unarticulatibility of the gap gives primacy to that very negativity.

The gap is not just textual, however. Through his persistent (if not systematic)

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[51] He states in another passage "What is significance? It is meaning, insofar as it is sensually produced" (61) giving primacy again to the erotics of text.

[52] Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 10.

[53] Aufhebung literally means abolition, annihilation, or cancelation.

[54] Alice A. Jardine, Gynesis *Configurations of Woman and Modernity* (Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), 124.

understanding of literature through a kind of textual erotics, Barthes also gives voice to the literal and material world of the body. Peter Brooks observes that:

> Barthes makes the... claim that the 'symbolic field'– the field of reference of the symbolic code, the one of his five codes of structure and meaning in narrative that refers to the text's overall rhetorical, thematic, and economic structurings– 'is occupied by a sole object, from which it derives its unity... This object is the human body.[55]

Indeed, it is largely through the often times ambiguous space of the body that Barthes' locates the coordinates of meaning in a text. This emphasis on the body as the site for meaning is useful in my analysis because I will come to locate the site of this presence of negativity in Kurahashi's texts precisely in and through the body.

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[55] Peter Brooks, *Body Works: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 6.

Chapter 3: Discourse on the Body

Whereas in the previous section I outlined the way in which Kurahashi's theory of the anti-world allows for negativity and nothingness to be given a tangible presence, in the following sections I will look at the way in which this is carried out in practice. As I have argued, Kurahashi's texts make emptiness present in the space of the body. In the following section, I will outline the way in which critical discourse has come to speak of the body generally, and also the way in which critics have chosen to speak of Kurahashi's textual bodies. In order to allow for the critical space needed to give primacy to the presence of emptiness, I will reorient my approach to the body by moving away from the usual understanding of the body as being specifically the "site of political expression"[56] towards an understanding of the body as the "site for the production of semantic fields."[57]

To speak of the body, I will begin with a brief look at the progress of thinking the body in the West.[58] Following this brief historical trajectory we can better situate the popular trend to see the body as a site for political expression inside of the larger 'discursive turn' with which I began my argument. The typical mind/body dualism of Cartesian thinking has set the stage and still arguably acts as a back drop for much discourse on the body today. Brooks outlines the traditional view afforded the body in the following quote:

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[56] Orbaugh, "The Body in Contemporary Japanese Women's Fiction," 119.

[57] Gail Weiss, "The Body as Narrative Horizon" *Thinking the Limits of the Body*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Gail Weiss (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003), 32.

[58] I begin with the Western tradition because this is the one that informs the critical readings of Kurahashi's works that I am engaging. Furthermore, although Kurahashi's texts are surely written in Japanese by a Japanese woman, they are born of a broader international context; they actively take up exactly such issues as Cartesian thought, and the implications it holds for the body.

> Cartesian 'dualism'— positing a thinking essence distinct from corporeality— creates a body that is no longer 'in' language but rather the object of discourse: The Cartesian body is 'outside' language; it is given to discourse as an object (when it is not, in its absent moment, exiled altogether) but it is never *of* languaging in its essence.[59]

By this understanding, the body lacks any agency or consciousness of its own; it can only ever be an inert object acted upon by a conscious subject.[60] Indeed, precisely because of the problematic absence of the body from cultural discourse in this essentialist understanding of the body, twentieth century thought has sought to re-conceptualize the body as a kind of text. Instead of viewing the body as a "purely material, biological organism that [was] separate from (and usually viewed as resistant to) cultural influences" understanding the body as a text acknowledged that the body was "not outside of or opposed to discourse, but is itself discursively constructed."[61] Through such an understanding, the body could then be seen to interact with and even constitute certain cultural ideas about the politics and performativity of sex and gender, among other things. This direction of inquiry has been and continues to be very necessary and insightful work as is evidenced by the ideas of, for example, Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous, and Judith Butler, to name a few. Reading the body as text also allows more specifically for certain readings of literary texts themselves: "meaning, especially meaning conceived as the text's self-representations— its representation of what it is and what it is doing— takes

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[59] Brooks, 5.

[60] It is important to note that mind/body dualism is not just a feature of patriarchy, and it has also been reappropriated by both egalitarian feminism and social constructionist feminism. Elizabeth Grosz does an excellent job outlining the detrimental implications of a certain complicity inside of feminism that simply replicates patterns of male domination by replicating typical notions of mind and body. (See Grosz *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, 10-19)

[61] Weiss, 25.

place in relation to the body."[62] Texts themselves could now be understood by also reading the body as a kind of text. Brooks himself carries out one such a project explaining that:

> modern narratives appear to produce a semioticization of the body which is matched by a somatization of story: [Brooks puts forth the] claim that the body must be a source and a locus of meanings, and that stories cannot be told without making the body a prime vehicle of narrative significations.[63]

The interplay between the body as text and the literary text as a kind of body creates a new kind of framework for literary interpretation.

Although there are, as I have examined above, positive and almost revolutionary implications to the shift in thinking about the body, there are also some problematic concerns that are now being raised concerning the status of the body as text. Namely, "if the body is a text, on what basis, if any, are we to differentiate it from other kinds of texts? In what sense can the body be said to "be" at all?"[64] Understanding the body as text gives the body voice and presence only insofar as it may function semiotically. When the body's ontology is defined only through its performative agency, it indeed fails to "be" in-and-of-itself. Although reading the body as text gets around the problematic conceptualization of an inert, a-temporal, a-cultural body, it also problematically promotes the loss of the body's materiality altogether.

There is a strong undercurrent in criticism that views twentieth century attempts at reading the body as text rather skeptically. Thomas Laqueur's following quote is

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[62] Brooks, 7.

[63] Brooks, xii.

[64] Weiss, 25.

exemplary in this regard: "But if not the body, then what? Under the influence of Foucault, various versions of deconstruction, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and poststructuralism generally, it threatens to disappear entirely."[65] Indeed, the problem with reading the body as text is that the body as a material presence is usurped by the textual signifying system that functions under the general sign of 'body'. The threat of this disappearing material body brings some critics to question the very validity of the claim that the body may be a readable text imbued with meaning altogether. Terry Eagleton perhaps best voices this concern, saying:

> The body, that inconvenient reminder of mortality, is plucked, pierced, etched, pummelled, pumped up, shrunk and remoulded. Flesh is converted into sign, staving off the moment when it will subside into the sheer pornographic meaninglessness of a corpse. Dead bodies are indecent: they proclaim with embarrassing candour the secret of all matter, that it has no obvious relation to meaning. The moment of death is the moment when meaning haemorrhages from us. What seems a celebration of the body, then, may also cloak a virulent anti-materialism— a desire to gather this raw, perishable stuff into the less corruptible forms of art or discourse.[66]

Indeed, just as the body of Cartesian thinking could not account for the influence on and of culture, the 'body' as text, as 'sign' can little account for the 'flesh of mortality.' In the image of death, Eagleton dramatizes the loss of presumed meaning for in death the body claims its total and meaningless materiality. It would seem that what is needed then is a re-approach to the body, one that starts with and continually returns back to the body's materiality (in all its meaninglessness and flesh) while at the same time one that allows for and accounts for a discursive and indeed meaningful realm. Although this project is perhaps a little too ambitious, I think it is possible to at least approximate a reading that

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[65] Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 12.

[66] Terry Eagleton, *After Theory* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 164-165.

would take both these directions (the materiality, and the signification inherent to the body) into account. Before I get into an illustration of this through an analysis of particular textual bodies, let me first show the way in which the discourses on the body that I have briefly over viewed above are a functional part of both the critical work on Japanese women's literature generally and on Kurahashi Yumiko specifically.

Some of the problems inherent in discourses on the body are foregrounded in the texts and surrounding criticism of Kurahashi Yumiko. The pervasive physicality in her work celebrates not just the body, but the mind as it is articulated through the body. In fact, one critic goes so far as to say that:

> The basic term of Kurahashi's bizarre world is 'biologism,' a point of view which reduces everything physical or metaphysical into a biological fact or problem. (Notice that when the reduction is done for the metaphysical, we have materialism, and when it is done for the physical we have animism as when we say 'the city *breathes*').[67]

By translating the meta-physical into the physical and then subsequently even into the biological, that is, more specifically, into the body, we arrive at a view of the body that refutes both the position that the body is separate from the mind and that the body is just a text.

The body understood through Cartesian thinking to be only a static entity constituted by the "sum total of its parts, organs, tissues and cells" which when investigated is "fully mastered"[68] does not exist in Kurahashi's texts. Indeed, we can add

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[67] Mori Jōji, "Drag the Doctors into the Area of Metaphysics: An Introduction to Kurahashi Yumiko," *Literature East and West: Women and the Japanese Literary Tradition* March 18:1 (1977), 78.

[68] Marta Zając, "Eroticism as Transgressive Sexuality: Some Reflections on Body, Death and Sex," *Representations of the Erotic*. Eds. Tadeusz Rachwal and Tadeusz Slawek (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Universytetu Śląskiego, 1996), 109.

up the sum total of all the aspects of one body and still arrive at no conclusion as to what the body may actually be. Moreover, the point of view that sees the body as a static entity does not really allow for the incorporation of the notion of process into a conception of the body. The textual bodies of Kurahashi's work are defined most times in terms of the processes they undergo due to their own ontological standing or because of the effects of their desire. Another problem with 'adding up the sum total of all the parts' of the body in order to 'master' or come to understand it is that Kurahashi's bodies often lack specific 'parts' to be added up, or more importantly no matter how many parts the reader may find, one's picture of the body will never be complete.[69] Alternately, the reader encounters bodies that are full indeed, but not of parts, and organs, that could help articulate the static body, but rather, that are full of emptiness. We cannot view Kurahashi's textual bodies as 'a sum total of parts' because they are not so much constituted by their parts as by their metaphysics. These bodies are shifting, complex, and despite this, paradoxically empty.

It would seem then that to analyze such complex and shifting bodies would require looking at these bodies as texts. And indeed this is the direction taken by most criticism on Kurahashi's bodies and on bodies in general. Just as proponents of the canon of women's literature structure their criticism around political readings that lend agency to a female subjectivity, so too do they read the body as a text. When bodies are interpreted as texts, they are also afforded an agency to speak which hitherto has been unavailable to them. Unearthing this agency is especially relevant for academic work that

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[69] Take for example the Rector's body in *The Adventures of Sumiyakist Q*. No matter how long Q may look at the Rector or from which angle he is unable to either perceive or even conceive of the Rector's totality.

seeks to explicate the effects of patriarchy on the body, or alternately, that seeks to find a voice of resistance in the body. Because of this current in criticism Kurahashi's texts have often been put to these ends. Yumiko Hulvey, for example, cites Kurahashi as one of the modern women writers who uses the Yamauba topos to "confront problematic issues such as identity, sexuality, and the traditional role of women in modern society."[70] From this limited perspective she speculates that:

> by choosing to write about the challenge of living as women in patriarchal society, women writers are able to exorcise or alleviate their feelings of frustration. Why would most of these writers choose to promote negative images of women, if not to express their ambivalence or anger at having to cope with living in patriarchal society.[71]

This view affords only this one reason why women writers would portray negative images of women in their texts; such a limited perspective must necessarily be blind to even some of the most obvious contradictions in a text. Kurahashi's portrayal of negative women figures in her texts, for example, is coupled by an equally negative portrayal of men. In fact, negativity is not just inherent in her portrayal of men and women, but rather is often times a pervasive aspect of her textual worlds. Negativity has more to do with her understanding of how fiction should be written than with the reality of women in patriarchal society. Keeping all these points in mind already complicates the simple reading assumed by Hulvey that women are portrayed negatively simply to express the writer's angst about patriarchy.

Despite the limited nature of this kind of reading, the conceptualization of body as

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[70] Yumiko Hulvey, "Myths and Monsters: The Female Body as the Site for Political Agendas," *Body Politics and the Fictional Double*, ed. Debra Walker King (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 71.

[71] Hulvey, 72.

a site for political expression is a tempting one put forth by many critics. Hulvey's line of thinking comes out of an already established practice in the approach to women's writing that views "the body as a site of political expression in fiction."[72] By listening to the body selectively we are indeed able to find a narrative of political expression. As I explored in the first chapter, this kind of work is especially important when we consider the pervasive silence in literary discourse concerning the woman's position in patriarchy up until the 1960's, and in some areas even into the present. However, this line of criticism, like any, becomes dangerous when it presumes to exclude other directions of inquiry. That is, it is important to look at the body not just as it exists as a site of political expression, as a text, but also as it exists as an actual presence. Echoing Weiss' concern, I return again to the idea that the body when conceptualized as a text lacks the ability to have a specific ontology. If the body is defined only through its agency as it functions in the "political battle ground,"[73] then outside of that line of inquiry the body loses all ability to signify other possible meanings and intentions. This is especially a concern I have for the bodies of Kurahashi's texts because, although they are acknowledgably used to articulate "political expressions" (especially concerning the constructed nature of gender, sex, etc.[74]), they also embody her textual metaphysics. The central element in Kurahashi's textual bodies negated by this kind of approach is the pervasive presence of emptiness. This emptiness in these bodies is explored by critics insofar as there is an obvious parallel

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[72] Sharalyn Orbaugh, "The Body in Contemporary Japanese Women's Fiction" *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing*, eds. Paul Gordon Schalow, Janet A. Walker (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 119.

[73] Orbaugh, "The Body," 124.

[74] See for example Faye Kleeman's "Sexual Politics and Sexual Poetics in Kurahashi Yumiko's *Cruel Fairy Tales for Adults*."

between the emptiness in Kurahashi's textual bodies and the emptiness of the womb in a woman or the emptiness of a woman in society.[75] And yet what I am suggesting is that emptiness is relevant not only insofar as it is the site of political agency, but also as it is the site and substance of Kurahashi's metaphysics. The ontology of the body must be maintained in a very material way in order to give an actual presence to emptiness and hence to her central textual project.

Through an understanding of the body as text, moreover, as a politically encoded text, the body created by the writer is also, by extension, understood to signify the writer's own personal agenda. Sharalyn Orbaugh works under this presumption saying:

> If women propose to construct (or reconstruct) a space in which their own experience is somehow primary, it would seem that the body, the physical body inside which we live, would be the "touch-stone" that could keep us centered … The political and the ideological for women often boil down to the physical and the personal.[76]

This conflation of the physical body and personal experience presupposes, on one level, that the former aspect exists only to encode the presence of the latter. Although this is surely true in many cases, I believe that such a universalizing claim is generally unfounded, and more specifically, incompatible with the textual bodies present in Kurahashi's fiction. The bodies in her texts resist any reading that could assume the manifestation of Kurahashi's own "personal experience" through their substance. In addition, Kurahashi has time and time again warned her critics to stay away from the assumption that her fiction has anything to do with reality, or more specifically that it has

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[75] These are links made by Kurahashi herself in "Yōjo de aru koto," (1965) [Being a witch] found in the essay collection *Watashi no naka no kare e* (1970) [*To him inside of me*].

[76] Orbaugh, "The Body," 124.

anything to do with her own experience.[77]

Another misconception that this kind of approach to the body propagates is that the body is presumed to be an essentially female space. Why is the body considered to be primary to the experience of women and not men? Although this supposition is supported by a healthy tradition inside feminism which conceptualizes the body as the site for the female voice (in contrast to say, language and the narratives it creates which is the site of the masculine voice) it also forms the basis for some unfounded assumptions. There is also a danger of reinscribing the Cartesian notion that body/nature/woman is always subordinate to mind/culture/man. That I speak of the body does not necessarily mean that I am specifically trying to find a voice for my experience as a woman. And yet, this is the resulting conclusion of the above perspective. Cannot the "political and ideological" for men also "boil down to the physical"? Indeed, we can see evidence of the universality of this preoccupation with the body in the works of not just women but also men at different times and places. More specifically in Japan around the 1960's (the time in which all of Kurahashi's texts which I will be focusing on were written) it is noted that there was a focus on these kinds of themes in both the writing of men and women. For example, one Japanese critic (Okuno Takeo 奥野健男) points out that:

> It was the trend of the times in literary and philosophical circles immediately after the war and continuing right up to the present [1968], to emphasize along with social revolution and humanism the importance of

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[77] "Shōsetsu no meiro to hiteisei," analysed in Chapter 2, speaks to this point well. In this essay Kurahashi is specifically critical of critics who wish to read her narratives as in any way reflecting aspects in her own life. This strong opposition is due of course largely to the fact that literary circles in Japan often frame their criticism around the presumption that good literary work must be autobiographical. I think we can extend this criticism to the presumptions inherent in the supposition that "political expressions" are motivated by "personal experience."

the carnal (*nikutai*) and freedom in sex.[78]

Doug Slaymaker focuses his inquiry on the preoccupation with the body by male writers (Tamura Tijirō 田村泰次郎 and Sakaguchi Ango 坂口安吾 among others) writing after the war. From this example alone I think it is apparent that the body is not simply a site for identity construction or politics for women, but also for men. The conceptualization that "women… are more directly inspired or hampered… by the call of the body" and therefore write about the body to address the "basic terms that make a woman a woman"[79] is a necessarily limited position. It allows neither for the possibility that women could write about bodies to address concerns other than the ones of their identity as a woman, nor does it open up the possibility that men may write about the body to address issues of identity and politics.

Another example of the insightful yet inevitably limited nature of reading body as text can be found in the reading of Kurahashi's textual body as performative. Atsuko Sakaki reads the emptiness found in Kurahashi's texts as significant insofar as it "enables both fiction and the 'self' to be performative; they can perform any role they are assigned."[80] Sakaki reads this poignant emphasis as a kind of political expression on the part of the author. She outlines the relevance of this performativity through Judith Butler's understanding of the performative, hence constructed nature of sex and gender. However, Butler herself points out that "that the gendered body is performative suggests

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[78] qtd. in Doug Slaymaker, "When Sartre was an erotic writer: body, nation and Existentialism in Japan after the Asia-Pacific War," *Japan Forum*. 14.1 (2002): 83. See also Slaymaker's *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*.

[79] Mori Jōji, 78.

[80] Atsuko Sakaki, *The Intertextual Novel and the Interrelational Self: Kurahashi Yumiko, a Japanese Postmodernist*. (Ph.D. diss., University of British Columbia, 1992, 12.

that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality."[81] When the body is defined only through its ability to execute a performative gesture, this signifies to the critic that outside of this act, the body ceases to be relevant and is subsequently denied any ontological status. This emphasis on performativity is necessary, once again, in order to show the essentially constructed nature of sex and gender (i.e. convey a 'political expression'). That is, if everything is a performance then all notions of "essence" can only be conceptualized as performed construct. Through such a perspective the critic can subvert patriarchal notions that use essentialist arguments to oppress women. However, the result of this analysis of performativity is that the body is only meaningful insofar as it shows the artifice of constructs through its performance; the body is not meaningful in and of itself. The other oversight of this kind of analysis is that all of Kurahashi's textual bodies are not necessarily performative. In fact, some are characterized by their inability to perform. These bodies simply exist, and it is these bodies that are the quintessential markers of emptiness.[82]

In none of the above outlined approaches is the substantiality and significance of the body given the necessary weight. Reading the body through a typical mind/ body dichotomy, the body is presumed to be knowable simply as the sum total of its parts. This approach does not suffice to deal with the complexities of Kurahashi's texts that poignantly reduce even the metaphysical into the physical. Reading the body as a text, or more explicitly, as a text encoded with some sort of "political expression" also falls short

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[81] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (Great Britain: Routledge, 1990), 173.

[82] Here I am thinking of the figures of the ET in "Uchūjin" or of the Rector in *The Adventures of Sumiyakist Q* the significance of which will be explored in later chapters.

as an adequate approach to Kurahashi's bodies. This second approach allows for meaning to exist in a body insofar as the body illustrates or undermines a specific agenda through its acts. Neither of these approaches allow meaning to exist from and proliferate out of a specific ontology of the material body. Asserting this ontology of the body is necessary for my project insofar as it allows for the metaphysical to exist in the physical. If we can establish the ontological status of this emptiness by showing how it is actually made present inside of the material body, and if we accept that it is this embodied emptiness that structures the metaphysics of Kurahashi's anti-worlds then I may validate the claim that I put forth in the second section of this paper that the concept of the anti-world is valid in Kurahashi's thought not only through the way in which it participates in social discourse, but more importantly for my purposes, through the way in which it systematically privileges a metaphysics of negativity.

To come to understand the complexity of Kurahashi's textual bodies in this light I think it is important to reorient our approach to and our fundamental understanding of the body. In the above section I have shown how both the Cartesian view of the body and the view of the body as text are inadequate for the interpretation of Kurahashi's texts. In my subsequent analysis of Kurahashi's textual bodies, I understand bodies to be, in all their ambiguity and tendencies to go beyond themselves, "the site for the production of semantic fields." This understanding of the body allows the body to remain central to any inquiry regarding the body, while at the same time allows us to understand that the body is always somehow moving across its own borders. I agree with and proceed from the statement that "the body at its limits… need not be a site of collapse, negativity, and

failure, but rather can become a locus of proliferation, mystery, and possibility."[83]

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[83] Weiss, 9.

Chapter 4: Exploring the Anti-world in the Text

Before delving into the particular bodies in the texts, I want to consider Kurahashi's texts themselves as a kind of body. If we follow Jōji Mori's suggestion and read Kurahashi as an "anatomist at autopsy"[84] we can account for much of what we encounter textually. Through an almost clinical approach to her texts, Kurahashi displays all the 'blood and guts' of the bodies involved. Her insistent and precise detail of bodily function accounts for many of the grotesque images reported with calm detachment on the part of the various narrators. If Kurahashi is an "anatomist at autopsy," then from her text, from the body she incises, she unearths several organs: Othered bodies, grotesque bodies, constricted bodies, bodies full of emptiness, and landscaped bodies, among others. To evaluate the characteristics of these specific 'organs,' I will begin by looking in detail at two pairs of bodies that form a kind of an axis through which we can understand some of Kurahashi's textual bodies: namely the axis formed from an opposition between, what I call an absenting body and an expansive body (4.1), and the axis formed from the coupling of the L and K characters (4.2). Subsequently I will look in greater detail at the issues of negativity and the body (4.3), the abject body (4.4), and lastly at bodies full of emptiness (4.5). Through such an in-depth look at the textual bodies (by this I mean the actual bodies described in Kurahashi's texts) I hope we can come to an understanding of the way in which the bodies in Kurahashi's texts actually make manifest Kurahashi's metaphysics of negativity and emptiness through these bodies' very materiality.

4.1: Bodies Which Absent Themselves vs. the Expansive Bodies

To look at the difference between bodies which absent themselves and bodies

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[84] Jōji Mori, 78.

which expansively consume I will contrast the figures of Q and the Rector from Kurahashi's *Sumiyakisuto Q no bōken* (1969) [*The Adventures of Sumiyakist Q* (1979)].[85] The principles of the way each of these bodies constitutes itself are diametrically opposed to each other. The narrator tells us of Q's views on the body in the following quote:

> For Q the body was something like a stake driven in to show the whereabouts of the soul that was tied up to it. One was obliged to have it constructed in a modest way with the smallest necessary amount of bones and flesh so that it might fulfill this function; and since this thin stick was there to support the noble spirit, then the thinner and feebler one looked the more proper that was.[86]

Embodying the Cartesian rift between mind and body, Q privileges the space of the mind or "spirit." Unfortunately for Q the world in which he exists is largely physical. He is reminded of his physicality time and again by other characters who mock him, and by his own body, which, despite Q's best attempts at negating his physicality, is still a present reality. We are told that:

> Admittedly Q's spirit was nurtured by his body, as that body was nurtured by food. However, there is a kind of spirit which demands to be self-supporting, which looks in contempt at the body which sustains it, and behaves as if it did not exist within its cage of flesh. Q was such a person, and so for him the body, food, and of course excretion, were things it was not worth paying serious attention to.[87]

Q can indeed be seen to want to negate the presence of his own body, so wrapped up is he in his "critical" thinking about the world. Although his body remains an undeniable

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[85] All quotes from this work will list the original page numbers found in Kurahashi Yumiko, *Sumiyakisuto Q no bōken* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1969), and subsequently the page number of the translation found in Kurahashi Yumiko, *The Adventures of Sumiyakist Q*, Trans. Dennis Keene (St Lucia Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1979). The quotes used here will be taken from the English translation.

[86] Kurahashi, *The Adventures*, 203-204, 196.

[87] Kurahashi, *The Adventures*, 359-360, 348.

presence it is signified by its manifest desire to absent itself.

In contrast to Q's body, the body of the Rector exists solely for the purpose of expanding and consuming. The Rector is often described as a hippopotamus, or some sort of sea monster. In fact when Q first meets the Rector he is unable to take the Rector's body in entirely with his gaze. Spilling over visually and conceptually the Rector defines the premise of his existence through his will to increase both by consuming ideas and food.[88] When accused by Q of being the highest power in the reformatory where Q has come to work, the Rector defines both the nature of the fictional world of the text, and the nature of his own existence, saying:

> The basic principle of this reformatory is freedom… we have no pyramids, none of your dynamic systems here. All we have is existence, unsystematic, unformed. I am myself an excellent example of this. You may spur on your imagination as much as you wish, but you will find no fixed image that will express the ontological structure of your reformatory. I am no functional existence, no axis of the power system, nor am I myself any incorporation of power, as heavy as a stone, at all. I am merely the gravitational center of this world… I exist in place of the world. That is what my existence is. But as for power, with its principle of action, that is something with which I am obliged to say I have nothing at all to do.[89]

The Rector's body, though it may be unsystematic and unformed, does not collapse through this seeming lack. His body instead continuously expands as it incorporates ideas and objects into itself by virtue of its insatiable appetite. Interestingly, the fact that ideas and objects both have the same currency for the Rector (they are, as if made from the same substance) pays further testament to the way in which the metaphysical (ideas in this case) is truly the same as the physical.

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[88] Kurahashi, *The Adventures*, 55, 47.

[89] Kurahashi, *The Adventures*, 73, 63-64.

The Rector's body is coupled with his wife's body which is also continuously expanding. The premise of their bodies' expansions varies, however. The Rector clarifies the discrepancy saying:

> I transform substance into my flesh, in order to occupy all of the world, of space, with myself; where as she expands that space which she unfolds within her, aiming at a purse-like condition in which the whole world may be inserted. Thus, I say that she evolves an increasing darkness which is probably greater in immensity than the world.[90]

Ironically, it is the wife's body that unfolds through its emptiness rather than the Rector's body that expands through its incorporation of things from the outer world that is of 'greater immensity than the world'. The emptiness inside of the wife, far from being a negligible absence, comes to define her as a goddess and gives her the ability to purify flesh "which has become coated with the dust of the mind."[91] In this way the wife also becomes an object of desire at the reformatory. The instructors vie for access to the wife through a ritualistic game. The winner of the game is expected to use the money won to buy the favors of the Rector's wife. This desire for an encounter with the wife is not only sexual/ physical, but is also metaphysical. The winner's mind is indeed cleansed as a result of the sexual encounter with Otherness. As Q's experience with the wife shows, however, to be able to experience this Otherness fully one must be open to it. Because of Q's limited and closed ideological framework, he cannot see his encounter with the wife as anything but an undesirable transgression, and so must flee the wife's Otherness.

The Rector himself also has a kind of desirability, not erotic in this case but rather a kind of inevitable desirability. The Rector is the site of the reformatory's gravitational

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[90] Kurahashi, *The Adventures*, 127, 118

[91] Kurahashi, *The Adventures*, 116, 107.

center; as a result people are, willingly or not, inevitably drawn to him. On numerous occasions Q acknowledges his "fear that he might be sucked into this fleshy mass [of the Rector]."[92] Other characters who do not antagonize the Rector's embodied Otherness, as does Q, do not seem to have a problem with this pull. We are told of one character's encounter by the Rector: "she was drawn here by the gravitational pull of my mighty stomach, and placing her mouth to my navel, she whispered into me all the latest information."[93] Without the resistance of the subject, the Rector's pull seems almost effortless. Herein lies another difference between the Rector's body and his wife's body. The Rector draws bodies to himself through his own desire, while bodies are, out of their own desire, drawn to the body of the wife. Generally speaking, however, it can be said that these bodies full of emptiness or full of cosmos (the wife and the Rector, respectively) are significant because of the way in which other bodies are drawn to their Otherness.

To contrast the figure of the disembodied Q and the embodying Rector and wife we come to a central understanding of one axis of possibility in understanding Kurahashi's textual bodies. Q, refusing his body, also has a narrow mind; his perception and interaction with the world are formed only by one blinding ideology (Sumiyakism). The Rector, on the other hand, understands everything because his body can consume it. These two opposing bodily representations can be understood as a conceptual difference; Q's body and the Rector's body differ not because they are made of a different substance (indeed throughout the novel the theme of cannibalism emphasizes the sameness of

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[92] Kurahashi, *The Adventures*, 53, 44.

[93] Kurahashi, *The Adventures*, 325, 314.

flesh), but rather because they are conceptualized differently. We can understand the difference through the following direction of analysis:

> When viewed as an energy system, the body may be qualified through two conflicting tendencies: a tendency towards conservation of energy, and as such it remains a sort of "closed-circuit system," with a vicious circle as a possible metaphor for it; and a tendency towards transgression, when the body persists due to continuous expansion… These two modes of the body's being can be extended into a more comprehensive pattern. We find it possible to view *sexuality* and *death* as displaying, in a similar way, the potential both for regression and transcendence.[94]

Using this framework we can see that Q can be representative of a closed-circuit system, whereas the Rector can be viewed as a transgressive expansive body.

Because Q is closed he has an inability to confront Otherness, let alone learn and expand himself by means of it. When confronted with the presence of the Rector's unknowable cosmic body, he not only fears the Rector, and hence antagonizes the Rector, he also feels powerless against him. Indeed, because of Q's inability to confront the Otherness of the Rector he is the lesser, the weaker of the two. During one such confrontation Q fears that:

> the tentacles of the Rector's consciousness had entered into him from all entrances of his body and were going to reach to his inner organs, and with this fear he had the hallucination that these organs were melting within him and flowing out from the extremities of his digestive system.[95]

Because of his inability to confront or conceptualize Otherness, Q fears the Rector, despite the Rector's self-asserted powerlessness. Similarly Q cannot let his flesh be cleansed "from the dust of the mind" by the Rector's wife and must flee her; he does not understand her, nor the nature of their encounter because his body indeed represents a

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[94] Zając, 109-10.

[95] Kurahashi, *The Adventures*, 324, 312.

kind of regressive inwardness.

Another example of the negative effects associated with Q's closed-circuit system is seen in the effects of his masturbation practices. Although he always imagines an Other whom he is having sex with while masturbating, he is always sure to first disempower the image of the Other before masturbating to her image.[96] This masturbation is indeed another signifier of the regressive closure of Q's body. Zając speaks of the closure inherent in masturbation in the following passage:

> When D. H. Lawrence, in his article "Pornography and Obscenity," opposes the practice of masturbation to sexual intercourse, he recognizes a corpse-like quality induced in the body through the repeated acts of self-abuse: "There is no change, only deadening..." Death as progressive deadening... excessive egocentrism; self-analysis turns finally into self-abuse: "there is no real object, there is only subject. The author never escapes from himself, he pads along the vicious circle of the self.[97]

Perhaps because of this Q can never truly act; the text records passages upon passages of Q's self-analysis but no real action or rather interaction between Q and any Other.

The negative portrayal of this regressive, closed system body, when opposed to the Rector's and his wife's expansive bodies, give the reader two extremes by which to understand some of the bodies in Kurahashi's texts. The imbalance between them shows us the privileged position that expansive bodies are afforded in Kurahashi's texts. Granted, at the end of the novel we find the wife's dead body shriveled up into almost nothing, and the Rector's body being consumed by the very people which he was consuming when living. So it could be said that these privileged bodies are worse off than that of the closed Q, who at the end of the text is seen wandering off to some unknown

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[96] For example, see 177, 169.

[97] Zając, 110.

place. However, we must also acknowledge that for Q his journey will not change. His body regresses inwards; his journey will be the continuing journey of a vicious circle. In the case of the Rector, however, it seems fitting that his body is being eaten by the world he is said to have embodied. The Rector's death is not tragic or regressive, but rather is transcendent. Death generally signifies no tragic end, but rather, a kind of transfiguration. In the case of the Rector he is transformed insofar as he is consumed by the very universe that he was said to contain inside of himself. Although the process could be considered to be circular, I would say, rather, that it is almost cyclic. Every piece of universe that enters the Rector changes him, shifts his coordinates slightly; so too, when he is himself eaten, the world around his remains is changing. I will return again to the idea of death in subsequent analysis, but for now I wish to pause on the topic of the Rector, and the Rector's wife because it is through these figures that Kurahashi sets the coordinates for empty space. By privileging these expansive bodies, Kurahashi forefronts the expansive nature of Otherness, and the presence of emptiness.[98]

4.2: The L and K Character and Body Complex

The next axis of textual bodies I will look at is the L and K couple. This pair of characters falls inside of a larger trend in Kurahashi's earlier writings to signify characters through the arbitrary signs of the alphabet. Sakaki lists the characteristics of these characters in the following:

> L (intelligent and unconventional woman who does not have a womanly reproductive body), K (L's male counterpart), S (convention-bound man of

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[98] It cannot be said of the Rector strictly speaking that he embodies emptiness, rather he embodies "everything" insofar as he embodies the world of the Reformatory. The wife, however, does represent this ideal of embodying emptiness. The wife is similar to the E.T. body in "The Extraterrestrial" in that it contains an expansive void in its own body. In still other texts the expansive emptiness is not inside of a body *per se*, but rather inside of a concept, for example, death. See section 4.5.

> poorly developed physique and intelligence), M (convention-bound woman of well-developed body and scanty intelligence, P (patronizer and womanizer), and Q (masochist).[99]

These characters form a kind of contemporary *roman à clef* that pervade many of Kurahashi's earlier texts. Although one can see this act of arbitrary naming as a kind of stripping away of humanity (as for example in one story where Victoria Vernon views the act of naming a character K as a means of "[depriving] him of the greater part of his name and identity" [100]), in the case of most of her characters there is no 'humanity' to be stripped away. That is, because they exist inside of an anti-world they are not meant to represent normal human society. Although these character names do function as signs inside of a larger semiotic system or text, the signs themselves are arbitrary and so the text is meaningless except for the way in which these signs interact.[101] Reading these signs (characters) as text we can come to interpret and define the characters through the way in which they interact with each other. However, falling in line with the skepticism I expressed earlier about reading the body as text, I am unwilling to stop at interpreting the characters simply as signs. In fact, the way in which Kurahashi's characters interact and are rendered meaningful to us is through the space of the body. Generally speaking, if anything is communicated between these characters it is mainly through physical acts. This also explains why, although "nothing happens" in Kurahashi's texts, in fact everything happens: sex, incest and matricide, for example, are all normal events in

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[99] Sakaki, "Kurahashi Yumiko," *Modern Japanese Writers*. ed. Jay Rubin (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2001), 188.

[100] Victoria Vernon. *Daughters of the Moon: Wish, Will, and Social Constraint in Fiction by Modern Japanese Women*. (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1988).

[101] I am, of course, borrowing this idea from post-structuralist thought, which can be said to be complicit in the dematerialization of the body.

Kurahashi's texts. Desire, that which motivates the character's to act is always routed in the physical, be it in the physicality of the character's bodies (i.e. through sex), or in the physicality of an imagined world.[102] What becomes meaningful then is not the signs/ names themselves but the coordinates they designate: the space of the actual body of the characters. While post-structuralist thought leads us to assume that the arbitrariness of the signifier implies a negation of a signified, Kurahashi's arbitrary signifiers instead free the signified from the boundaries of the signifier to create meaning through their own substance. Because their names are without meaning, the reader is more directly invited to form a picture of these characters not through their names but through the character's bodies and (inter)actions.

A recurring subtext throughout many of Kurahashi's texts, L and K are generally considered to be a quasi-incestuous brother and sister pair. They are also marked by Otherness (like the Rector and his wife), but in L and K's case, their Otherness draws each to the other. Although sometimes they are conceptualized antagonistically, ideally, they exist symbiotically. This ideal state can be seen in their configuration in *The Adventures of Sumiyakist Q*. In this novel L and K are thought to be the children of a virgin birth by the Rector's wife. Being born of the 'fertile emptiness' that the wife represents, they represent a kind of transcendental completeness when they are coupled. Although they are two separate bodies, the bodies are inevitably linked; what one body experiences physically the other also physically responds to. So, for example, when K

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[102] By this I mean that, for example, a character will not desire happiness *per se* (an abstract emotion) but will instead desire some kind of physical transformation recorded in the text as visions of a universe exploding, the details of which will be viscerally recorded. See, for example, the narrator's desire in "Shūma-tachi" (1965), ["Ugly Demons" (1994)].

falls limp from being flogged, L also falls unconscious.[103] Their unity (what I call transcendental completeness) is defined by Q through the image of "two angels embracing."[104] For Q, however, whose closed nature does not allow itself to see anything outside of his own paradigm, it is impossible to explore the implications of L and K's being. An experience and comprehension of the transcendental quality of L and K would necessitate Q to open, and this seems truly impossible for him. This tension between being able to perceive, but not conceive L and K's transcendental completeness is recorded in the following passage:

> The truth is that Q had indeed been emotionally disturbed by the strange beauty of K and L, and this had given rise to… incoherent thoughts, which could hardly be considered as healthy. When the mind meets something difficult to grasp, when the consciousness extends its pseudopodium and touches an unseizable object, blood rushes to the head, and there is an acceleration in the amount that the false consciousness externally secretes. Q had shown exactly such symptoms.[105]

When Q is confronted with the sublimity of K and L's existence, being unable to conceive of it within the boundaries of his closed understanding, he must necessarily reject it. Interestingly in this novel, L and K appear only as a minor subtext. They are presented from the beginning as an already unified entity and disappear half way through the story, jumping together into another kind of void, an acidic lake encountered one day on a reformatory picnic.

The L and K dynamic, however, rarely appears as such a unified manifestation of transcendental completeness in Kurahashi's other stories. More often than not we see

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[103] Kurahashi, *The Adventures*, 134-135, 126-127.

[104] Kurahashi, *The Adventures*, 123, 114.

[105] Kurahashi, *The Adventures*, 124, 115.

these two bodies as they are aspiring towards unity. The tension formed between these two entities that are in the process of coming together, but that are somehow inevitably pulled apart (more often than not by the eternal forces of the world around them) is what forms the second central axis of bodies in Kurahashi's texts. That is, these are bodies that are drawn together through a desire for the Other, but that are somehow not able to consummate the desire through a complete transfiguration. The aspiring bodies of L and K form the backbone of this dynamic. I will make use of some of Sartre's conceptions of the body[106] in my look at one such story of Kurahashi's called "Washi ni natta shōnen" (1961) ["The Boy who Became an Eagle" (1974)].[107]

For Sartre the process of an encounter and transfiguration by the Other begins with the *look* wherein "I am possessed by the Other; the Other's look shapes my body in its nakedness, makes it emerge, sculptures it, produces it as it *is*."[108] The next step is the caress: "*Desire is expressed by the caress as thought is by language*. The caress reveals the Other's flesh as flesh to myself *and to the Other*… in the caress it is not my body as a synthetic form in action which caresses the Other; it is my body as flesh which makes the Other's flesh emerge."[109] This initial phase of the process outlined in the above passages explicates the centrality of the body, especially in regards to the way in which the body

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[106] I do not mean to imply that Kurahashi specifically meant to emulate Sartre's ideas. Beyond the fact that there is an acknowledged influence by Sartre on Kurahashi, who wrote her thesis on his *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre notions of self, body, and Otherness lend themselves well to articulate the way in which Kurahashi's bodies function.

[107] All page numbers will be listed first with the original text page (as it is printed in *Kurahashi Yumiko Zensakuhin.* vol. 2, 119-134), and then with the translation page. All citations will be given from the translation. Kurahashi Yumiko, "The Boy who Became an Eagle," trans. Samuel Grolmes and Yumiko Tsumura *New Directions in Poetry and Prose* 29 (1974): 116-133.

[108] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre* (New York: Random House, Inc. 1965), 209.

[109] Sartre, 217.

encounters the Other. This process is replicated, almost verbatim, in the interaction between L and K in the short story "The Boy who Became an Eagle." One exemplary scene is narrated in the following sequence:

> love… had to be the fine expression of an ordinary imagination through the body… L petted the boy. Where her hand stroked him, he became even more naked, a substance of extreme purity, complete flesh itself. L's eyes searched, and her tongue followed where they had been…L possessed [all of K's flesh]. Each [part of the body] was an exquisite *objet*… Then the roles reversed… L herself became an *objet*.[110]

In this story L and K both caress each other in turn, each one becoming flesh through the caress of the Other. The use of the French, written in katakana, *objet* also has a way of giving primacy to the otherness or foreignness of each one's body for the other. There is a threatening and deadly quality to the desire of L and K that accords with Sartre's understanding of desire as being "troubled— as stirred up and disturbing."[111] Indeed, as with many of Kurahashi's texts, this one highlights in particular the destructive, and even at times deadly possibilities inherent in desire. Thinking back to Kurahashi's "The Maze of the Novel and Negativity," which celebrates these destructive qualities, we can interpret this danger in desire and the possibility of death not as something to be feared and cautioned against but as something to be accepted and experienced on its own terms. Indeed, at the end of the story when L sees her fiancé stabbed by her lover K (who has become an eagle), she expresses no fear or regret. Rather, she seems almost amused and likens the situation to the events of a movie set. And further when K's knife is turned on L herself, she is also portrayed as a heroine on a movie set. We are denied any first person

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[110] "The Boy who Became an Eagle" 128-129, 127.

[111] Sartre, 212.

narration from her (which is otherwise interspersed throughout the text) but we do hear her final scream. However, because L screams erotically in at least two other points in the text, we are only able to read her final scream as, at worst a melodramatic gesture from the movies, or at best an erotic response to K's deadly penetration.

In this story L and K are unable to achieve transcendental completeness. Although they do touch each other's otherness, especially insofar as they surrender themselves each to the other as an object of desire, they are unable to truly be absorbed by the Other. In this narrative, unlike the L and K narrative in *The Adventures*, there is a large power imbalance between the two; L is older then K and in a position of authority over him. Ideally, however, the point toward which all desire aspires is the transcendental completeness of the L and K in *The Adventures*. Sartre also accounts for the process whereby desire for the Other which is inscribed in the flesh culminates in a kind of mingling with the Other. He says that to "*lay claim* to this being which I am… is conceivable only if I assimilate the Other's freedom. Thus my project of recovering myself is fundamentally a project of absorbing the Other."[112] By this same process my freedom is also hypothetically assimilated by the Other who is "absorbing" me. This point which marks the transfiguration of each entity also marks the point of a kind of unity of Self and Other. In "The Boy who Became an Eagle," however, because of the power imbalance it is L who assimilates K's freedom; the possibility for a mutual absorption of the Other each by the other is only at best glimpsed in fleeting moments.

More generally, this story records the physicality of desire not just through the bodily interactions of L and K but also through the visceral conceptualizations of the

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[112] Sartre, 210.

more abstract notion of love. Not only is love explained to the reader by way of graphic description (for example: "L injected K with Love as if she were a doctor attempting an experiment in dissecting a living body)," but they communicate the idea of love to each other through the body: "For L his confession of and talk about love was all accomplished through his exquisite body. Words, the words which would blow away the compact sense of existence were unnecessary."[113] This is not just desire for the Other (which could still be fundamentally construed as physical), but an actual idea of "love." Sometimes also Kurahashi further lifts the concept of love ("ai" 愛), out of the text by including it in quotation marks. It is interesting to note that even though love exists conceptually, and is even visually abstracted in some of Kurahashi's texts through the use of quotation marks, it is always understood by the characters as it is physically experienced inside their own body, and communicated between characters as a physical phenomenon.

Although there are many versions of the L and K narrative, one pervasive element is the dynamic of desire for the Other that is always recorded through their bodies. So far I have delineated a paradigm through which I think we can interpret individual bodies (4.1) and a paradigm through which to explore the way in which bodies interact (4.2) in Kurahashi's texts. In the first place I have attempted to bring to the fore bodies that contain "fertile emptiness" and that I think are the site for creative possibility. Secondly, by looking at the L and K character complex, I have tried to create a vocabulary through which to explore not just the coming together of bodies, but also the possible mingling of bodies, another site of creative possibility in the text. By tracing these basic body

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[113] Kurahashi, "The Boy who Became an Eagle," 124-125, 122-123.

dynamics we can come to understand the centrality of both bodies of Emptiness and bodies of Otherness that are privileged in Kurahashi's texts. Although, of course, these two paradigms do not function separately, but rather in a fluid manner, I think they establish a space from which we can interpret the various bodies that populate Kurahashi's visceral texts.

4.3: Negativity and the Body

The body's emptiness is foregrounded most often as an expression of its negativity. Although I have developed an extensive analysis of the way in which Kurahashi uses negativity in her anti-worlds in the second chapter of this paper, I have not yet shown the way in which negativity is made present in the very texts, in the very bodies themselves. My claim was that although the negativity inherent in Kurahashi's anti-worlds could be viewed as simply the opposite, or the negation, of the 'real' world, I encouraged a 'positive' reading of this negativity as an actual presence that was not necessarily dependent on the 'real' world to define its parameters. It was this kind of negativity which existed in and of itself which sustained the ontology of the anti-world. Following suit with my theoretical reading of Kurahashi's anti-worlds I will show the way in which Kurahashi's 'empty' textual bodies are not defined by their lack, but rather are defined and sustained by negativity. To define these bodies as only the opposite of supposedly normative or positively conceptualized bodies undermines the pervasive presence of negativity privileged in the texts. All bodies are portrayed negatively (both the grossly excessive ones and the empty ones), but I reiterate here that negativity is not necessarily a bad thing, rather it is a part of the textual metaphysics of Kurahashi's texts that celebrates the substantiality of emptiness and nothingness.

The first text that I will use to look at the ideas of negativity, nothingness, and emptiness is Kurahashi's 1963 short story "Ai no inga" ["Love's negative"]. The very title of this short story indicates the presence of negativity pervasive in her text. The 'negative' of the title does not signify negativity, but rather a negative which is made in the process of developing a film. Although the word "negative" is synonymous only in English, the very idea of a photo negative is a negative concept in that it records traces of the real world in reverse; the positive space of the real world is recorded as negative space in the photo negative. The fact that this kind of photo negative is an actual material space lends it a tactile presence. Furthermore, although love in the story is often spoken about as a concept or feeling by the characters, it is made tactile by lifting it out of the text with quotation marks. So, for example, when the narrator (who we presume is K since he speaks of L as his twin sister) is speaking of his fiancée's love, he says:

> In fact, the only thing that I can assert was that she had not captured me in her burning 'love'. Beyond this, the 'love' that was believed in so passionately didn't exist. She had vacantly built herself into a temple of magnificent 'love', and this temple, devastated and lost, had withered away.[114]

It is the conceptual space of 'love' that structures K's fiancee's body, and yet this space of the body, at least through K's eyes, is empty.

This conceptual emptiness is replicated in the actual physicality of the fiancée's body. K observes that the fiancée's "breast which was hidden by her arms was without blood or meat, a hollow like a volcano crater of the moon. I thought I could see the harp of her white ribs. When she stood up to come close I cried out 'you looked like a dead

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[114] Kurahashi "Ai no inga," 49. See appendix for original.

person, truly like a walking mummy'."[115] Her body, lacking blood and muscle, is constituted by emptiness which in this case is equated with death. The Otherness of the fiancée's body can only be thought of in terms of death as K has no way of entering into or understanding her. One could mistakenly assume that K only antagonizes his fiancée's otherness because she represents the normative world. That is, if K is a symbol of the anti-world then he would naturally stand in opposition to 'worldly' figures like his fiancée. However, this is not necessarily the case. K equally antagonizes both this fiancée and Mika, who is his lover, and even himself. Reflecting on Mika's body he says:

> Within a person that is not like me, the small darkness which exists is enough to make me shudder. When I thought about the darkness that comes from the abyss in a woman's body I was all the more distressed because it was shown to me.[116]

Mika comes to represent generally the space of woman: woman who is necessarily marked by her negativity insofar as she has an empty space inside her. This is a perspective not just put forth in this story, but also in Kurahashi's theoretical writing. Kurahashi herself tells us she finds this emptiness inside of her own body: "I am tired of [pretending to love somebody], when inside of myself extends an empty darkness which is probably large enough to accommodate the galactic system. However, I do not intend to fill it up with love, religion, or marital life."[117] Such an understanding of her own body and the space of her own sex recurs again and again in her early essays and fiction.

The emptiness and negativity ascribed to woman, however, is also a pervasive

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[115] Kurahashi, "Ai no inga," 49. See appendix for original.

[116] Kurahashi, "Ai no inga" 47. See appendix for original.

[117] Kurahashi Yumiko, "Aru hakaiteki na musō"(1963) [A Destructive Dream], 132. Quoted in Atsuko Sakaki, *The Intertextual Novel*, 12.

element of Kurahashi's textual worlds. In "Love's negative" even K is defined negatively from the start. K records his understanding of the 'negativity' that constitutes himself in the following quote:

> When I was alone surrounded by the walls, the bed, toilet, bath and dresser, and my own self was reflected in the mirror, this self was also locked in by a body. You could see my life as being like my own excrement. Over a few days this discovery became a certainty. In fact I discovered that I couldn't love myself.[118]

In another scene he thinks of his own body as being a "stained and foolish imitation."[119] Both his own body and his own love of himself is encoded with negativity. The negativity inherent in his own body, in the bodies of the women, and inherent in the world around him constitutes the nature of the textual universe.

Turning now to another of Kurahashi's stories "Shūma-tachi" (1965), "Ugly Demons" (1972) we can see another (in)version of the presence of negativity in Kurahashi's textual worlds. To begin with, the narrator's body again in this story is itself marked with a telling negativity. According to the narrator, his body's surface is ugly and its insides are empty. He likens himself to a "demon shut up inside a shell."[120] The body of Q, another character in the story, also bears the marks of negativity. Because Q is black, this signifies for the narrator that Q is an inversion of woman. That is, whereas women "conceal" their darkness inside, the negro makes the darkness visibly present on his flesh. Conceptualizing Q in this way, the narrator feminizes Q and also disempowers

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[118] Kurahashi, "Ai no inga," 42. See appendix for original.

[119] Kurahashi, "Ai no inga," 45. See appendix for original.

[120] All quotes will be taken from the translation "Ugly Demons" In *Autumn Wind and Other Stories*. Trans by Lane Dunlop. (Rutland, Vermont and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1994) 201-221. The original can be found in "Shūma-tachi." In *Kurahashi Yumiko zensakuhin* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, vol. 6. 1975-1976). I will cite first the origninal page number and then the page number of the translated text: 27, 201.

Q's otherness by making it a characteristic of his surface not his depths. But even though Q is supposedly not as threatening for K, he is still a dangerous element that K sees fit to eliminate.

In this story negativity is made present not only in the space of the body but also in the space of the narrator's dreams. Dreams, compared to reality, naturally privilege silence, emptiness and Otherness. Yet for the narrator, dreams also afford a transfigurative possibility that is denied him in his reality; this transfiguration is for the narrator, namely, destruction. Although there are two bodies of Otherness in the text that attract the narrator, his desire is largely geared around a thirsty vision he has of nothingness. He expresses this vision in the following passage:[121]

> A sun moored in darkness, an empty pale skeleton of a sun! It was the castle of "nothingness" that I had long dreamed about. A castle of nothingness that towered up in a place that was nowhere, a false light that issued from an imaginary lamp, a wind with no reason for being.[122]

Through this vision, characterized by the presence of 'nothingness', the narrator comes to see the negative vision of the sun as the real sun. Whereas the sun of his vision has presence and relevance for himself, the "everyday sun" is understood to be a "false sun," and a "sun of illusion."[123] However, this sun, this castle of nothingness exists as a marker, as a reminder of some previous event; the "skeleton" and "corpse" of the sun records none other than the traces of transfiguring death. The narrator's longing for this dreamed transfiguration is recorded as a kind of "ecstasy."[124] This pervasive longing throughout

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[121] This passage resonates with a quote from "The Maze of the Novel and Negativity" quoted in Chapter 2. See appendix note 47.

[122] Kurahashi, "Ugly Demons," 33, 211-212.

[123] Kurahashi, "Ugly Demons," 33, 212.

[124] Kurahashi, "Ugly Demons," 27 and 33, 202 and 211.

the text is not just for the transfiguration of someone around him or for a transfiguration of himself; he longs for a transfiguration of his entire cosmos. He fantasizes about some "absolute disaster,"[125] or in another instance he is "burning with expectation that the huge palms of the storm [will] buffet the world to pieces, shipwreck it."[126] In one recurring dream he is even the agent who attempts to bring about this transfiguration:

> Often my fingers... put all their strength into an attempt to pull the monster back under the sea... Raising a hideously obscene scream, the monster was torn away from the land and, the thick hide of the whole world being rolled up along with it, was slimily hauled back into the depths.[127]

Despite the ecstatic desire for transfiguration, however, nothing ever happens. In the text the desire for transfiguration is continually contrasted with the reality of stagnation. Instead of nothing ("mu," 無) actually happening, actually being made present, what pervades the textual universe is the stagnation of nothing ever happening. It is his lover M who stands for a universe of stasis. She represents (and indeed eventually becomes) the 'perfect wife', playing her role, following her 'script' in life perfectly. She champions the idea of "an eternally stable universe" over the narrator's conception of "an expanding universe, a universe gone mad... [in which] nothingness was the aim of existence."[128] And it is her voice that dominates in the closing scene of the story: "Nothing happened, M said that night. Nothing is happening. In this world. This was M's magic formula."[129] M's voice, always written in katakana, flattens reality into a stasis that denies the narrator the

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[125] Kurahashi, "Ugly Demons," 29, 204.

[126] Kurahashi, "Ugly Demons," 35, 214.

[127] Kurahashi, "Ugly Demons," 27, 202.

[128] Kurahashi, "Ugly Demons," 29-30, 205.

[129] Kurahashi, "Ugly Demons," 39, 221.

possibility for realizing his dream of transfiguration.

Because the narrator chooses M, the signifier of a stable universe, over Q, he rejects the possibility for transfiguration. He literally banishes the possibilities of making present his vision of the "dark star" by killing Q's darkness. He tells us: "I struck out at the black ghost. The convulsion of the Negro was difficult to tell from the convulsion of the whole darkness."[130] By killing the negro, the narrator destroys the possibility for approaching Otherness. Unfortunately for the narrator, despite his deep desire for transfigurative destruction, his actions bring him only to a life of stagnation in a world lit by a "fake sun." For the narrator of this story, the presence of negativity is indeed only possible in the space of dreams. His own body, though marked by negativity, is unable to assert his desire, and so is unable to fulfill his vision of transfigurative death.

4.4: The Abject Body

Warned as we may be that Kurahashi's texts are not populated by normal "human" characters, but rather supposedly anti-human ones, the confrontation with some of these overtly physical bodies is, I would venture to say, even for the most objective reader, necessarily offensive at times. Instead of confronting recognizable bodies, we are faced with truly Othered forms; inexplicable aliens, black shadows, hippopotamus-like shapes, all constitute the forms that signify bodies. Even those that better approximate human-like bodies repel us by unapologetically smelling, vomiting, excreting, and generally overflowing. The unsympathetic narrators leave no room for any kind of nostalgia for the absent human body, rather they challenge us by continually returning our gaze back to the grotesque. Most times we are repelled by the alien body's Otherness, but

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[130] Kurahashi, "Ugly Demons," 39, 220.

sometimes we may catch a glimpse of something beyond. I want to speak of this encounter with the grotesque in part using the idea of the abject because, although the term does carry at times overbearing psychoanalytic tones, it approximates the moment of both attraction and repulsion felt towards the Other.

The grotesque, especially the grotesque body, is a central element in all of Kurahashi's work. Even some of her more 'realistic' stories (that is, stories not involving obviously alien bodies) 'human' bodies are themselves shown to be grotesque. In some cases they transfigure, like for example K who becomes an eagle, or in other cases the 'human' body is itself shown to be grotesque. In "The Boy who Became an Eagle," L makes the comment that "she knew that she made an obscene picture, reigning naked over this *objet* [K] and indulging herself so in the petting. My own body is gross flesh that flaps and quivers all by itself."[131] It is not just the sexual act that makes L grotesque (and in fact sex in Kurahashi's tales is often times scripted as obscene), and it is not that L has transformed into a grotesque object; she is herself in that moment obscene in her very raw physicality. The grotesque is an element that can belong to all of the bodies of the anti-world, not just to the obviously othered bodies.

In Kurahashi's first story, "Zatsujin bokumetsu shūkan"(1959) ["Week for the Extermination of the Mongrels"(1983)], we can find all the elements of the grotesque that are subsequently developed in her later work. In this story the bureaucratic system has declared a campaign through which, in the duration of a week, all "mongrels" are to be targeted and exterminated. Though the exact definition of these "mongrels" is unclear, it is understood that anyone who is anti-social and does not follow the codes of society may

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[131] Kurahashi "The Boy who Became an Eagle," 127.

be targeted. Although the reader could expect that this spectacle of extermination should be the main site for the grotesque in the text, in fact it is the body of K, the main character of the story, that becomes the focus of our revulsion and attention. K is a grossly obese professor whose only preoccupation is consumption. He is continually salivating, and as the story progresses he seems to grow even fatter; although his clothes have trouble fitting him in the morning, over the course of the day his pants completely fall off of him and his jacket barely stays on. Although he does feel some shame and does recognize others' disgust with and mockery of him, he is more preoccupied with and most times completely absorbed in eating his pieces of smoked ox-tail and canned fillet of shark. His relative apathy to the state of his own body is coupled with an apathy towards other people. He is indifferent not just to strangers (he ignores his students during a lecture, opting instead to focus on eating and gazing at his penis) but also to his own wife (who we are told has been exterminated earlier that morning).

If the state of K's body does not suffice to revolt us, then the persistent mention of body secretions might. During the course of a train ride someone leaves "steaming turd" on the floor, and K licks a man who proceeds to urinate on the floor. Not a couple of sentences later K is seen to be vomiting air.[132] K also produces excretion of his own: "He couldn't distinguish whether it was fear or anger, but some fluid was constantly being secreted in his abdomen."[133] Here again we see abstract emotion directly translated into the visceral body. The pervasive obscenity of the physical in this story brings us only as far as revulsion. In this story there is no possibility for escaping the grotesque. Although

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[132] Kurahashi "Week for the Extermination of the Mongrels," 10,106.

[133] Kurahashi, "Week for the Extermination of the Mongrels," 14, 110.

the story is based on the premise that the mongrels are being exterminated (and hence the kind of grotesque bodily excess that K signifies might be thought to be coming to an end), the story ends with K smashing in the heads of his students, asserting that "only the Mongrel will survive."[134] Although this may be seen as a delusional statement (the story teaches us not to trust K's skewed perception) the exterminations are themselves an obvious kind of grotesque excess. Indeed, there is no space in the story, as there are in some others for a kind of moving beyond or moving through the grotesque body to another world.

The pervasively grotesque nature of the anti-world most obviously put forth in the space of the body could be articulated in another way through the concept of the abject. Although the abject can be considered to be, most basically, a rejection of the Other, or more specifically in Kristeva's terms, a rejection of the archaic mother, there are specific nuances of the term that apply more directly to my project. Namely, the tension formed between both an attraction to and a revulsion from the Other in the abject presents a certain configuration that allow me to read the spaces of othered emptiness as a space of possibility.

The abject, we are told by Kristeva, is not just a place of rejection, indeed, it marks off a very important moment of possible transfiguration. Kristeva writes:

> There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced. Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects. A certainty protects it from the shameful— a certainty of which it is proud

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[134] Kurahashi, "Week for the Extermination of the Mongrels," 17,113.

> holds on to it. *But simultaneously, just the same, that impetus, that spasm, that leap is drawn toward an elsewhere as tempting as it is condemned.*[135]

It is this 'elsewhere' that I am interested in. Although the abject seems to fortify its doors strongly against any intrusions, repelling anything that comes near, there is present in Kristeva's interpretation at least the possibility of an elsewhere. An encounter with the abject seems not necessarily to always end with death but at times with a kind of transfiguration: "abjection is a resurrection that has gone through death... it is an alchemy that transforms death drive into a *start of life, of new significance*."[136] Although Kristeva is not clear (indeed perhaps it is not possible to be) as to what this new significance may be, there is at least an insinuation of the possibilities inherent in the abject.[137] Kristeva writes that "the abject is edged with the sublime. It is not the same moment on the journey, but the same subject and speech bring them into being."[138] If the abject then is just part of a possible process that leads one to new significance, I like to think that perhaps the sublime is a moment of opening on that journey. As opposed to simply thinking about the abject as a dead-end rejection of the Other, I think it is important to think of it in terms of its possibility for entering the Other.

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[135] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 1. My empahsis.

[136] Kristeva, 15. My emphasis.

[137] This desire to define a new significance, even a new ontology, is a broader project which Kristeva shares with a number of twentieth century thinkers. Hélène Cixous puts forward the idea of *écriture feminine* as not just a new way of writing but as a way of thinking through some of the problems of Western thought. I am by no means wanting to conflate these ideas, rather I wish to point out the similar directions inside of French feminist thought.

[138] Kristeva, 11.

The body of the Rector in *The Adventures,*[139] for example, serves to illustrate this twofold movement of attraction and repulsion. In the scene when Q meets the Rector we get a sense of both these tendencies:

> The Rector's huge body, a mass of flesh of such enormous material size as to defy the human imagination, seemed to posses a proportional magnetic power which had thus drawn Q towards it. As they shook hands Q went weak with the fear that he might be sucked into this fleshy mass. The Rector took Q's hand in his, in this terrifyingly large slab of flesh, which was, however, surprisingly dry.[140]

While Q is literally drawn towards the Rector, he also fears him and is repulsed by him. In the following pages where Q witnesses both the Rector's ingestion of a cannibalistic meal and the almost ritualistic shaving of the Rector's body, Q is continuously plagued with disgust. During this sequence of events the Rector's body also takes on a grotesquely motherly aspect. Having been castrated to better facilitate his total body shavings, the Rector assumes motherly gestures. During his meal, the Rector attempts to force feed Q:

> He then took a somewhat smaller piece and pushed it towards Q's mouth, at the same time opening his own mouth as a mother sometimes does when feeding her baby. It gaped darkly open like the entrance to the infernal regions, and it was difficult to determine which of the red purplish flesh within it was the Rector's tongue and which the piece of meat he had just put in. Then what was no doubt meant to be soothing, encouraging moan came forth, but the only effect it had upon Q was to give him a sense of being threatened; and since he was now in a semi-coma, his tongue worked unconsciously to reject this aggressive lump of meat.[141]

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[139] This text is populated by many other grotesque bodies, The Theologian is perfectly repulsive in his crab-like appearance and his stench. Even the Doctor who has an excellent physique is repulsive. I develop my analysis of the Rector here to continue with the 'autopsy' of his body since it is, I argue, one of the central bodies of abjection.

[140] Kurahashi, *The Adventures*, 53, 44.

[141] Kurahashi, *The* Adventures, *55*, 46.

This passage manifests both the Rector's 'motherly' interest in Q and Q's revulsion and final physical rejection of the Rector. The 'motherly' aspects of the Rector are re-enforced when the Rector tells Q of his unconditional love for Q; unfortunately for Q, this love involves being an object of the Rector's consciousness which means subsequently being eaten by the Rector. This perverse inversion of the mother figure and the excessive body that accompanies it are quintessential manifestations of the grotesque. John Clark states that: "despite [the grotesque's] twofold overtones— exhilarating exaggeration and the ominously extraterrestrial— the grotesque was always understood to be excessive, requiring boundaries and regulation lest it burgeon, break out, or get out of hand."[142] In the anti-world of the reformatory things do not "get out of hand," they are in their natural state completely out of hand, at least according to our and Q's standards. Although Q's indignation gives us the opportunity to express our own revulsion within the boundaries of the text, we are reticent about sympathizing with Q as he shows himself to be, and is clearly characterized by the narrator as, an ignorant and obstinate protagonist. In the world of the reformatory the inmates who are children and adolescents are kept in dehumanizing conditions only to be eaten by the people of the reformatory. The instructors, theoretically the guardians of the children, follow their own desires and have little to do with the children. Everything is complicit with the grotesque system of the reformatory, even the very landscape. The landscape, described as a body in its own right,[143] embodies a kind of hostility that marks it not as an inert entity, but rather as an

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[142] John Clark, *The Modern Satiric Grotesque and its Traditions* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 18.

[143] Another instance of this landscape described as body can be found in, for example, "Kyosatsu," (1961) ["The Monastery" (1985)].

active Other, that itself consumes characters (as in the case of L and K). The following describes the body-scape of the terrain where the people of the reformatory go for a picnic:

> This was certainly the head of the headland. It had gradually narrowed until one was walking along a backbone from both sides of which the sea could be seen, but then it suddenly widened out again and rose up steeply. Thus to what was like a neck something like a head was attached, a solitary peak of hairless white skin. This head also possessed one awful eye... a crater lake, full of some acid solution of bluish-green color.[144]

It is this crater that L and K jump into. Evidently this grotesque scene is also somehow deeply attractive for the twin couple. Their end is not recorded as being accidental or tragic, rather it is purposeful and almost ritualistic; dancing around the edge of the crater, they fall in holding each other in their arms.

Although we can find a gesture towards an 'elsewhere' in the abject, it is difficult to actually envision the possibility of anything but a final rejection of that elsewhere insofar as the abject fundamentally signifies a rejection of the Other. To move from the abject body to the space beyond, it is useful to think of Alice Jardine's term "gynesis" which refers to the "process through which a new language emerges, a project of embracing what was hitherto alien, monstrous, or unclean." [145]This attraction towards Otherness, even grotesque otherness, does not necessarily end in a final revulsion and rejection as it does in the process of abjection. By embracing the Other, it is perhaps possible to enter into that 'elsewhere', indeed to have 'new significance'. Although Kurahashi's early stories mainly focus on the abject body, insofar as they present images of repulsive and obscene bodies, they do also at times provide a glimpse of an elsewhere.

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[144] Kurahashi, *The Adventures*, 240, 231-232.

[145] Linda Badley, *Writing Horror and the Body*, (Westpost, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996), 11.

In the above analysis of the Rector, we find one situation wherein there is an obvious attraction to this repulsive Other. The Rector's wife, as I have mentioned in an earlier section, also embodies a kind of 'elsewhere'. Although she is revolting to Q, others vie for access to her body in order to be cleansed, somehow purified, or put another way, transfigured. It is in Kurahashi's story that privileges the truly alien, wherein we may take in more than just a glimpse of this elsewhere; we are afforded a view of the Other's entire cosmos.

4.5: Bodies full of emptiness

Kurahashi's 1964 story "Uchūjin" ["The Extraterrestrial" (1998)] brings to the fore the possibilities of the actual presence of an elsewhere. The story weaves together some of central concepts that run throughout her stories: darkness, nothingness, death and Other worlds all come together in the figure of the ET. The ET also acts as the paradigmatic body of negativity in that, as K, the narrator, tells us: "it had in its body a sheer dark void like the universe."[146] The ET's body becomes the quintessential site of not just the presence of negativity but of a truly possible other world.

On one level, the story line records the story of L (who in this case is K's older sister) and her engagement and subsequent marriage to S. This level of the story functions in large part to portray the empty and relatively powerless workings of the official world. Recorded as it is through the voice of the narrator K, we are presented with a relatively hostile view of both the space of the family (by this designation I exclude L), and the space of society (which resembles "real" society, but which differs in some

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[146] All quotes will first list the original page number and then the page number from the translation. "An Extraterrestrial" in *The Woman With the Flying Head and Other Stories by Kurahashi Yumiko*. Trans. by Atsuko Sakaki (Armonk, New York, London: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 3-28. The original can be found in *Kurahashi Yumiko zensakuhin*. (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, vol. 4. 1975-1976), 205, 26.

drastic ways from it). K's antagonism to his family is apparent; his mother inspires him to think that all women over forty should be slaughtered and his father is conceptualized as a heartless and blind prosecutor, impotently wielding his official power. The police officer, another symbol of official authority, who confronts L and K about the ET is also characterized by his ignorance and is relevant only insofar as he becomes a joke that L and K can share. S is presented as a pig who in appearance and in consumptive habits ends up being perhaps the most repulsive character. All of the characters, however, that function on the level of 'society' and 'family' are presented as animal-like beings that care only for consumption (as in one of the final scenes of L's and S's marriage where the guests are oblivious to everything but the indulgent meal to come) and for social code. Indeed for as animal-like as these social characters are, they are also poignantly fixated not on 'reality' *per se* but on the codes that should be followed. For example, no one is interested in the ET as an actual presence. L and K are the only characters who actually look at and evaluate the ET on its own terms. The members of 'society,' however, are all concerned with the rules of keeping an ET as a pet in the city, or with whether it is a dangerous animal. When attempting to conceptualize the ET, the people of society must liken it to something already available to them through their limited cognitive space; the ET is then, no longer an alien Other, but rather a pet, or even by one wedding guest's guess, a patient who has escaped from a mental institution.

The second and more powerful story line records the development of K and L's relationship and their relationship to the Extraterrestrial who one day appears out of an egg hatched in their room. The ET is constituted most notably by a darkness that the ET is born of and subsequently comes to embody. In fact, this darkness is neither just a

quality of the ET nor, we are told, is it an actual material substance. Instead this darkness is, according to what L and K can deduce, made up of nothingness. This darkness is nonetheless made present in the textual universe. When the ET is birthed from the egg we get a telling description of the ET's darkness: "darkness was supposed to disappear, eroded by the light. Instead, this darkness stuck part of itself out into the light, still retaining the shape of the egg."[147] Although this darkness is ominous, insofar as this darkness could potentially "swallow [one] into its depths"[148] it is only threatening to those that antagonize the ET's otherness. (Take for example the scene where S panics, his hand being momentarily swallowed by the ET). The nothingness that constitutes the ET's darkness is also repeatedly asserted as an actual presence. When L and K are lying together with the ET between them, K reflects:

> Between me and L lay the nothingness enclosed by the fake flesh, our universe, so to speak... We must have craved to enter it to achieve a perfect existence…I lost control of myself and tired to hug L along with the Extraterrestrial. But it was impossible to squeeze the infinite darkness inside the Extraterrestrial.[149]

K cannot 'squeeze' the darkness, negate it in some way to come closer to L; the nothingness is indeed an undeniable presence. At two other junctures in the text it is also said that the nothingness has an actual "scent"[150] that is "intoxicating," lending another visceral quality to the presence of the nothingness.

The nothingness inside of the ET is not just intoxicating, but, at least for L and K,

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[147] Kurahashi, "The Extraterrestrial," 191, 8.

[148] Kurahashi, "The Extraterrestrial," 187, 3.

[149] Kurahashi, "The Extraterrestrial," 202, 22.

[150] Kurahashi, "The Extraterrestrial" 201 and 206, 21 and 27.

also fundamentally desirable. K speaks of his desire saying: "I looked into it again, feeling mesmerized, as if catching a glimpse of another universe. For no particular reason I felt like disappearing through the dark hole into somewhere else. The temptation was so great it made me tremble."[151] In this case the darkness contains an acknowledged 'elsewhere' that is understood to be a viable reality for the narrator. This elsewhere, though it is contained in an Other's body, is not fundamentally abject. Though there is something obscene about this body (for example, it can consume anything that is pressed through any of its holes and it has no real will or consciousness of its own) it fails to repel L and K. This is possibly due to the fact that both L and K find a way of consuming the ET and to be consumed by it, without being annihilated by it. L 'consumes' the ET by playing with it, dressing it up and doing its make up. More poignantly both L and K consume and are consumed by the ET through sexual acts. Whereas L seems to have sexual contact with the ET only heterosexually (closing off the vagina with tape), K's desire is shown to be more open when he makes use of both the male and female sex organs of the ET. It is through sexual desire that L and K can express their desire both each for the other (at the end of the story they decide to consummate their relationship inside of the ET) and also their ultimate desire for the otherness of the ET.

Despite the fundamental Otherness of the ET, however, the ET in some way also comes to represent a more perfect human being. K narrates: "This chunk of nothingness was shaped like a hermaphrodite— the perfect human being, that is."[152] By likening the

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[151] Kurahashi, "The Extraterrestrial" 190, 7.

[152] Kurahashi, "The Extraterrestrial," 202, 22.

ET to human beings,[153] and moreover, by insinuating that the alien Other is the utopic space of hope for the perfect 'human' being, Kurahashi encourages us to rethink both our rigid conception of the human, as well as the idea of the Other. The ET is not entirely other at all; in fact it is entirely 'human', almost über-'human.' On the other hand, this 'human' characteristic does not neutralize the ET's Otherness, but rather brings certain elements of Otherness into the space which delineates the figure of the human being. The ET is often likened to certain human aspects such as, for example, when K is walking hand in hand with the ET and likens the ET's hands to K's,[154] or when the ET's size is expressed as the average of L and K.[155] The ET is the average of L and K also in the sense that it is a hermaphrodite. Having both male and female attributes allows both L and K to identify themselves as well as the Other in the figure of the ET. Because the two can have sex with the ET individually or simultaneously, they can join with the Other without necessarily being consumed by it. The idea of being consumed by the Other takes on a sexual aspect, without offering death (as in, for example, "The Boy who Became an Eagle") as the only possible outcome. K describes the sensations of this exploration of the Other in the following passage: "I was directly kissing the nothingness that was about to draw me in. I extended my tongue and let it swim freely in the other world."[156] Instead of antagonizing the Other, K and L are able to acknowledge the possibilities therein.

Even when the result of being consumed by the Other is understood to be death,

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[153] This notion is also echoed in an earlier passage in the text: "It seemed to me that androgyny must be an appropriate attribute for an Extraterrestrial. An idea occurred to me: perfect humans." 193, 11.

[154] Kurahashi, "The Extraterrestrial," 192, 9.

[155] Kurahashi, "The Extraterrestrial," 194, 13.

[156] Kurahashi, "The Extraterrestrial," 202, 21.

the concept of death no longer holds a threat. When K comments upon being consumed by the ET he dismantles the notion of death and opens the possibility of transfiguration: "it was completely absurd that people called entering the dark universe 'death.' I would simply move to another world, probably through an entrance they could not see." [157] It is by entering this "dark universe" that the characters can indeed enter into an elsewhere, an other world. The transfiguration is no longer an event *per se*, but rather a shift in space. L is the only body that we see pass into the other world in the text. By passing through the ET's vaginal opening, she travels into and is present in the other world. Not only can there be a presence of nothingness in the 'real' world in the text (through the space of the ET) but there can be a presence of the 'real' world inside of that nothingness (evidenced by L's transfiguration). There is some ambiguity as to whether K enters into the other world, his actual passage into the other world existing if anywhere perhaps beyond the boundaries of the text. The other world (darkness/ emptiness/ nothingness) is for L and K a place that they can consummate their desires for each other, thereby exploring and mingling, in a sense, each with the other. For, although the ET is the dominant Other, L and K also act as complimentary Others in this story as with the other L and K narratives. The possibilities of the elsewhere, beyond this suggested consummation of L's and K's, are left unarticulated by the text. The vastness, and the presence of the elsewhere is gestured towards, but the implications of that space are left for the reader to imagine.

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[157] Kurahashi, "The Extraterrestrial," 206, 27.

Chapter 5: Beyond the Represented Body

Having taken a look at some of the central bodies that we encounter in Kurahashi's texts and at the way in which they function, we arrive at an intriguing question: what do these bodies represent? Recognizing the difficulty of such a question, I wish to posit a few possibilities. Although Jōji Mori views Kurahashi's "exploration of the physical as a journey into the void," he is skeptical that an exploration of "the void" or any speculation about the "goal" of such a journey is the task of a literary critic; he leaves such a discussion to philosophers and insists that critics must focus instead on the "process."[158] However, despite the fact that discussion about "the void" may lie outside of the traditionally demarcated boundaries of literary criticism, and despite the fact that the void exists, to a large part, outside of the texts (itself not being constituted by the very stuff of language), I feel that with Kurahashi's texts it is precisely this void that the reader is continuously forced to return to. If the site of meaning in the texts is located in the parameters of the void, then it is precisely this place to which the reader must travel.

We can speak of this void through a number of different terms; I have throughout my analysis shown how Kurahashi's bodies and texts are structured around the idea of emptiness and Otherness. Both these concepts lie outside of any knowable or delineatable space; emptiness has no coordinates, Otherness is necessarily foreign. We can speak of the experience of the sublime, of the marvelous, or of *jouissance*[159] that is made manifest by the bodies in the texts. Each of these terms, however, designates both desirable and

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[158] Jōji, 85.

[159] Faye Kleeman uses this term to describe a sexual experience of L's and K's in "A Defiant Muse: Reading and Situating Kurahashi Yumiko's Narrative Subjectivity," *The Outsider Within: 10 essays on Modern Japanese Women Writers.* ed. Tomoko Kuribayashi (Lanham, New York, Oxford: University Press of America, 2002), 103.

undesirable connotations. If we move back to our initial site of discourse, however, we can perhaps find a common ground for the articulation, or rather the approximation of this void. These concepts, as they are manifest in the body, also move us beyond the limits of the body. We may know and articulate the surface parameters of the body, but the space that the body gestures towards is unidentifiable. Like Q who sees the "strange beauty" of L and K in *The Adventures of Sumiyakist Q* but is unable to grapple with what confronts him, so too we look into the void gestured towards by Kurahashi's bodies. We can choose like Q to back away from this phenomenon that instigates confusion, or we can probe further into the mystery; Kurahashi's bodies invite us to do the latter. The void is accessible, insofar as the bodies that communicate it are open. It is accessible, at least for the characters in the texts, most often by a kind of death, or through a sexual encounter. Zając articulates this in the following passage:

> *The veil is rent for an instant, and the mystery of being approaches fulfillment* through the moments of sexual ecstasy as well as death spasms. An act of erotic communion, the moment the body transcends its boundaries, (the transcendence parallel to the mental transcendence of the self), marks the unity of death, or of the consciousness of death and eroticism… eroticism can be linked to death also as a form of communication; communication implies self-exposure to the impact of the unpredictable, the rupture of the vicious circle of the self, *openness to the unknown*.[160]

The communication that occurs, not just between the characters in the text, but between the transcending textual bodies and the reader, allows us to approach the "mystery," the "void." Just as bodies at their limit do not imply failure and collapse, but rather transfigurative possibility, so too does the idea of death no longer signify simply a dead end. Through the manifestations of emptiness and Otherness in the bodies that we

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[160] Zając, 111-12. My emphasis.

encounter in Kurahashi's texts the reader comes to realize the void that structures the knowable world of the text. The void, moreover, becomes the site of meaning and possibility as it holds the possibility of communicating "the mystery." Despite its sometimes frightening or grotesque aspects, it is this void to which all open readers and textual bodies are inevitably drawn. Moving beyond the limited reading of body as the site of political expression, we can look to the body as a signifier for everything that language cannot express. "The body is, in other words, a crossroads, a space of limit *as* possibility."[161]

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[161] Weiss, 4.

Conclusion

I have come to the limits of Kurahashi's bodies and instead of repulsion and rejection, I have entered into them with these tentative steps/chapters with the anticipation of discovering an elsewhere. I pass through the elsewhere of Kurahashi's texts in the hopes that the coordinates I map out do justice to some of the more nuanced aspects of Kurahashi's metaphysics. If we can celebrate the negativity that Kurahashi privileges in our critical work (without immediately codifying it through a specific politics) perhaps we can open up the way we read and understand literature.

I have travelled the trajectory of an idea about the anti-world that brought me to the imperative of re-thinking some previous terrain. Thinking through some of the boundaries of the definition of Japanese women's literature I could better understand some of the critical work on Kurahashi Yumiko. My aim was to make a space for Kurahashi's texts that accounted for the presence of negativity in her texts outside of the traditional explanations afforded by political readings. The space that I found to account for this negativity was the space of the body. The bodies that I etched out of Kurahashi's texts made manifest Kurahashi's textual metaphysics of negativity by their very flesh. Passing though several texts, the textual bodies revealed themselves to aspire towards otherness, or moreover, to embody an elsewhere. Through this progression, it is my hope that I have provided an alternative possibility for reading through some of the complexities of Kurahashi Yumiko's anti-worlds.

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Appendix

Note 23: ‹‹事実››の報告 (285)

Note 27: オーソドックスな (285), 正統派の小説 (293), 古典な小説 (293), アクチュアルな小説 (288), プロパガンダ小説 (288), 私小説 (287), 通俗小説 (295), ルポルタージュ (285).

Note 30: 作者は‹‹事実››の支配に身をまかせた奴隷となるか、‹‹事実››を批判するひがみっぽい知識人となってしまいます。 (287)

Note 31: ‹‹事実››の報告や‹‹教訓››または‹‹娯楽››をあたえる商品(295)

Note 35: ‹‹この世界ではない世界››、いわば‹‹反世界››の存在を表現することなのです。これがじつはわたし流の小説の定義でもあります。わたしが‹‹反世界››と呼んだものを、あるひとは‹‹神››と呼び‹‹存在››と呼び‹‹無››とさえ呼ぶかもしれません。(289)

Note 37: 何々問題をみごとに描いている (289)

Note 44: 侯爵夫人五時に外出した. (285)

Note 45: そこでわたしの小説は、古いタイプの小説に対して、それに寄生し、それを喰らいあらし、それを破壊する‹‹癌››のようなものとなります。(285)

Note 46: 模作 (290) , 贋物 (289)

Note 47:
ここに‹‹形››をあたえられたものはわたしたちの日常世界に対してその‹‹贋物››の性質をもっており、それゆえにしばしば‹‹悪››という烙印を押されることを免れませんが、少くともある強烈な小説は、‹‹悪››へとむかうほどの過剰な‹‹自由››の実現となっています。それは、日常生活における時間とは別の、想像世界における時間をもつことによって現実世界から‹‹存在››の王冠を詐取し、それ自身もうひとつの現実となるばかりか、ときに現実世界を支配する‹‹持続››の原理すなわち‹‹喜››に対して、‹‹死››の原理すなわち‹‹悪››の火で世界を灼きほろぼしてしまうのです... (289)

Note 48: This quote has been translated before by Dennis Keene in his introduction to "To Die at the Estuary" and in parts by Atsuko Sakaki in "(Re)canonizing Kurahashi Yumiko" both sourses having informed my present translation.
‹‹事実››あるいは‹‹事件››の報告のの鉄則はつねに‹‹五つのW››、つまり‹‹いつ、どこで、だれが、なにを、なぜ››を明らかにすることですが、わたしの小説はむしろこういう限定をことごとく拒否することで空中楼閣をつくっているのです。いつかわからぬあるときに、どこにもない場所で、だれでもないだれかが、なぜという理由もなく、なにかをしようとするが結局なにもしないーこれがわたしの小説の理想です。(286)

Note 114: しかし彼女が、ぼくを熱い「愛」のなかに捕獲したのでないことだけ

は断言できる。以前には熱心ひしんじられていた「愛」はすでになかったし、彼女自身がむなしく壮麗な「愛」の神殿そのものだった。空虚で荒廃したあの神殿は痔せていた。(49)

Note 115: 腕に隠された胸には肉も血もない月の噴火口に似たくぼみがあって、白い肋骨のハープもみえたかもしれない。たちあがってぼくに近ずいてきたとき、きみは死人みたいだ、まるでミイラが歩きだしたみたいだとぼくは叫んだ。(49)

Note 116: ぼくではない人間のなかに、ぼくを根拠として小さな暗黒が存在しているということは、それだけでもぼくをぞっとさせる。その暗黒が女のからだの裂けめからぼくのまえに産みだされることを考えればなおさらのごとだ。(47)

Note 118:ところが、ひとりになって壁やベッド、便器、バス、調理代などにとりかこまれていると、ぼくはぼく自身をうつす鏡になり、そのぼくも肉体の器にとじこめられてしまう。ぼくの生活はぼく自身の排泄物のようにみえる。ぼくはそれを一たといそれがぼく自身のものだあっても一好まない。数日のうちにこの発見は、確実のものとなった。つまり、ぼくはぼくを愛することができなかったのだ。(42)

Note 119: ところがぼくのほうは、からだをよごしてばかげためねをしただけだ。(45)